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SideBoard™

Grinning Beatdown

by Dave Price

Top Extended Decks from Magic The Gathering PRO TOUR HOUSTON

Legions™

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963000000 ISBN 0-7430-0689-5
January 2003 · Volume 8 · Issue 44
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SideBoard

Volume 8 · Issue 44 · January 2003 · www.sideboard.com

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Pro Tour–Houston

Your Move Games Dominates

Seven Different Decks in Top 8

by Aaron Forsythe

Texas is big. It's the biggest state in the continental U.S. The land is big, the cowboy hats are big, and the state has produced its share of larger-than-life figures.

So it was only fitting that when the Pro Tour made its first stop in the Lone Star State in six years, the event was dominated by "big". Big Verdant Forces. Big Spiritmongers. Big Sutured Ghouls. And big Cognivores.

When Wizards first announced that the Extended format would be losing the *Ice Age* and *Mirage* blocks, *Fifth Edition,* and the precious dual lands when *Onslaught* became tournament-legal, the news was met with mixed reactions. Gone were Illusions of Grandeur, Gaea's Blessing, and the Animate Dead-Worldgorger Dragon combo. The loss of dual lands meant that deckbuilders would have to dig deeper into their toolboxes instead of just throwing the best cards of four or five colors into a deck. But the biggest change of all was the disappearance of Force of Will and Swords to Plowshares. Without the threat of the "free" hard-counter or the best targeted creature removal spell ever printed looming over their collective heads, fast combo decks and decks that spent all their resources on one monstrous threat looked ready to take over the world.

Post-rotation, most players worth their salt started playtesting with and against what looked to be the best remaining deck in the format: Tinker. With the ability to put out a huge Phyrexian Processor or Colossus by the second turn, lock the game with Mishra's Helix shortly thereafter, and add 40 to its master's life total with Crumbling Sanctuary, Tinker seemed to have all the best threats and the best answers.

And then people discovered black. Unlike the previous combo-heavy environment—the days of Tolarian Academy—you were at least guaranteed to get one turn without something going terribly wrong, and what you did with that one turn would make all the difference. Duress became the clear choice for busting up nonsense before it started. It was joined by Cabal Therapy in many decks, which brought combo decks back down to earth.

That's basically how things stood going into Pro Tour–Houston. Most of the 350 competitors showed up packing Duress. The most played decktype was "Reanimator", which ended up taking Tinker's place as the "deck that puts out something gross quickly." Vampiric Tutor—another card that showed up en masse in the event—gives Reanimator searching utility that Tinker cannot afford, and the obligatory Duresses keep the path clear for a turn-2 Verdant Force thanks to Entomb/Reanimate.

The most-played "true" combo deck, clocking in at ten percent of the field, was Aluren. Using the infinite card-drawing engine of Wirewood Savage-Cavern Harpy, most Aluren decks won by gaining some absurd amount of life with Soul Warden and then killing the opponent with a played-and-gated Maggot Carrier. In addition to the problems the deck has with discard, it also had to suffer through sideboarded Engineered Plagues and Stronghold Taskmasters, good answers to the Harpy engine.

Back: Peter Myrvig, Mattias Jorstedt, Bob Maher, Justin Gary, Darwin Kastle. Front: Jeroen Remie, John Larkin, Rob Dougherty.

The surprise deck of the tournament was "The Rock", a green-black midrange control deck built by Sol Malka years ago. Malka's version focused on the synergy of Phyrexian Plaguelord and Deranged Hermit, but modern versions turn to Spiritmonger as their heavy hitter. Why is the deck so good? Duress and Cabal Therapy wreck opposing hands, Vampiric Tutor gives access to "silver bullets," and the best board control card in the format, Pernicious Deed, cleans up any messes.

Other decks that made showings included updated Psychatog builds, "Lackey Sligh" with the new *Onslaught* Goblin Piledriver, "Suicide Black" (although not as suicidal without Demonic Consultation and Hatred, so maybe "Manic Depression Black"), and a crazy Japanese-Dutch concoction called "Angry Hermit Part 2," which wins with the combo of Hermit Druid, Anger, and a monstrous, trampling Sutured Ghoul.

The tournament started off with a bang—the battle of the all-time best, a Feature Match between Jon Finkel and Kai Budde. Both were playing blue-black Reanimator, but Finkel's version with Hapless Researcher looked amazingly outgunned by Kai's with Brainstorm. Budde took the match 2-0, but then fortunes reversed for the pair.

The loss to Budde must have put Finkel "on tilt," as the last American world champ ran roughshod over the rest of the competition on Day 1, finishing 6-1. Budde, on the other hand ran into a sea of hate—Gilded Drakes, Planar Voids, Coffin Purges, and Diabolic Edicts—that left him at 4-2 after six rounds, needing a draw to advance. His opponent in Round 7, the accomplished Ben Rubin, declined Kai's request and then defeated him with a Psychatog deck to keep Budde from his first Day 2 in two years.

The Rock showed itself to be legitimate after the first day; the only two 7-0 decks were both that black-green beauty. Tomas Kresja and Your Move Games's Darwin Kastle were the pilots of said Rocks. Also at the top after Day 1 were Denmark's Peter Myrvig with Pyschatog, greats Bob Maher and Kamiel Corenellison with the Angry Hermit deck, and Mike Hron with a crazy Rancor-Auratog homebrew.

As Day 2 got under way, Your Move Games's Justin Gary was making quiet waves with his updated Oath of Druids deck. Without Gaea's Blessing recursion, the deck can't fool around with 5 damage a turn from a lowly Morphling; instead, Gary's deck Oaths up humungous Cognivores—the flying blue Lhurgoyf that counts instants in the graveyard. By adding black for Pernicious Deed, Gary's deck had answers to just about anything his opponents could throw at him, and his deck proved that Oath of Druids is still one of the most powerful cards available in Extended.

A third member of Your Move Games, patriarch Rob Dougherty, was also hanging around the top of the standings. The amazing thing was that he was not running Kastle's Rock deck or Gary's Oath, but rather a retooled version of "Benzo", the monoblack Reanimator deck that stormed Pro Tour–New Orleans last year. The new Benzo featured Last Rites to clear cards from the opposing hand while dumping a fatty into the graveyard. It could also side in Faceless Butchers and Phyrexian Negators to punish opponents that hoped to win by attacking the graveyard.

As the end of Day 2 drew near, it was looking like total dominance for Your Move Games. Kastle had rattled off ten wins in a row at one point and then conceded to Gary in Round 11 in order to help his teammate make Sunday. Dougherty also put together a nice run, and defeated Portugal's Rui Mariani in Round 13 to make Top 8.

But Kastle's gesture to Gary came back to bite him. Kastle needed just a draw in the last three rounds in order to clinch a Sunday berth, but fate was toying with him. The big Bostonian was paired down in Round 12 and lost. He was paired down again in Round 13 and lost again. Still needing just a draw in the last round, he was paired down yet again. Kastle, all grit and determination, applied the beats and joined his two teammates—all with different decks—in the Top 8.

Joining those three in the Top 8 were Myrvig and his Psychatog; Maher with the Hermit; Sweden's Mattias Jorstedt, who managed to fight through a field of hate with Aluren; Ireland's top pro John Larkin, playing the same Reanimator deck as Kai Budde; and Holland's Jeroen Remie, a quiet force on the pro circuit, with another version of The Rock. That's seven different decks in the Top 8, and even the two Rock decks were built differently. The demise of the Extended format was greatly exaggerated.

Your Move Games, who entered the Top 8 ranked 1-2-3, would not be denied once the elimination rounds began. Gary dispatched Remie with ease in three straight. Kastle did the same to Jorstedt, thanks in no small part to Duress and Pernicious Deed. And Dougherty also surprisingly swept Maher, making good use of the Phyrexian Negators in his sideboard. Only the Larkin/Myrvig match went five games, with Larking using the techy Llawan, Cepahlid Empress to keep Psychatog off the board in the final two games.

In the semifinals, Kastle took on Dougherty. Dougherty commented that one of the reasons he chose to play Benzo at this event was how amazing it was versus the Rock, and he didn't disappoint. Kastle managed to steal one game with a handful of Edicts, but in the end, Verdant Force was too much.

On the other side of the room, Gary was making mincemeat of Larkin. Just when things would look to be going Larkin's way, Gary would magically worm his way out of trouble. A lesser man would certainly have lost the match, but Gary's several years of experience with the Oath archetype paid off big time in his 3-0 sweep of Larkin.

In the final, it was Your Move Games versus Your Move Games as Gary faced Dougherty. Dougherty's Negators and Nether Spirit fought valiantly against Gary's Cognivores and Palinchrons, but in the end it was Gary who won game 5. Treetop Village played a huge role, often attacking across an Oath-locked creatureless board or sucking up Edicts to keep Cognivore alive. Some things about Oath never change.

Dougherty's sadness at losing the finals was tempered by the fact that his team—named after the stores he owns—was the first to ever finish 1-2-3 in a Pro Tour. And to top it off, they did it in a Constructed event using three markedly different decks. That's what you call dominance—big, Texas-sized dominance.

Top 8 Profiles

by Josh Bennett

Justin Gary

In a word: confidence. On camera or off, Justin Gary sits down to a match and asserts his intent to win. He's one of those people that feed off high-pressure matches. Relentlessly arrogant, Gary does little to keep that energy to himself. Lucky for him he's got the talent to back it up. Bluster and a winning smile hide the abilities that nurture that kind of confidence.

Gary's first brush with greatness was his 1997 victory at U.S. Nationals. He continued to represent at Worlds that year, finishing 23rd. The following year, he made the Top 8 of Pro Tour–Rome. Though he fell off the radar somewhat, Gary was still a respected talent. One need look no further than the big names he teamed with while the rest of Your Move Games (YMG) were taking the name for themselves: Brian Schneider and Mike Long, then Dave Williams and Bob Maher. In 2001 when Zvi Mowshowitz and Alex Shvartsman needed a third for Pro Tour–New York, they turned to the man they thought was the best available mercenary. The fusion of their skills brought him his first Pro Tour Top 4.

One consequence of that was that it brought Mowshowitz and Shvartsman under the already-impressive Your Move Games banner. It also served to spur Gary to work towards greater success. He came close at the Masters Series at Nice earlier this year, but fell in the finals to Alexander Witt. There he played Oath, and it was natural that he would stick to a deck that he knew well. The loss of Gaea's Blessing meant shifting to a more aggressive strategy. Taking a cue from early Japanese designs, Gary's deck eschews recursion for a reliable gigantic finisher: Cognivore. Teammate Rob Dougherty said there were few players he would expect to run an Oath deck as expertly as Gary, and Gary proved him right.

This win graduates Gary from junior member status, putting him shoulder-to-shoulder with the "Big 3" of YMG: Dave Humpherys, Darwin Kastle, and Rob Dougherty. Expect this to be just the tip of the iceberg for his career.

Rob Dougherty

Rob Dougherty is the man behind the red and black. Owner of the Your Move Games empire, which spans stores in Maryland, Rhode Island, and now an online branch as well, Dougherty is the lynchpin of his store's eponymous team. The reason for this is twofold. First, as the team's official sponsor, he helps to make sure that members can get to events. This time around, he paved the way for teammates Darwin Kastle and Justin Gary—a pretty sound investment.

His other role is as a deck designer. For a long time, it has been whispered that Dougherty is one of the finest Constructed minds in the game. This was demonstrated at Pro Tour–New Orleans, where YMG's monoblack reanimator deck "Benzo" took the tournament by storm. It was a bittersweet tournament for Dougherty, who lost a fourteenth round match for Top 8 against teammate Kastle. Meanwhile, Dave Humpherys was also making Sunday. It was great to see his crew doing so well, but it was tough on Dougherty to be left out of the spotlight.

That's all changed now. He'd always been respected as a player, his four previous Pro Tour Top 8's made sure of that. With YMG's domination of this event, more and more people are recognizing Dougherty's impact on the game. Dougherty hastened this realization by resurrecting Benzo and playing it to a Top 4 finish while the rest of the world assumed blue-black was a better build for a reanimator strategy. Though Dougherty wouldn't say it in so many words, he's really pleased to have earned that respect.

And that's not the only thing that's changed for Dougherty. Getting married was the first step towards a different life, and on October 4, he celebrated the birth of his son, Ryan Robert Dougherty. He's quick to mention how his family responsibilities will take him further from the game, but he's excited at the prospect. Of course he'd love to be dedicated to the game he loves, but he's got something much, much better. He's still going to do his best to make it to the constructed Tours, of course. After all, he's got a reputation to live up to.

Darwin Kastle

"Pro Tour Fixture" doesn't do Darwin Kastle justice. He hasn't missed a Pro Tour. Ever. Even more staggering is that his success bookends his career. Way back in 1996, he placed second at Pro Tour–Atlanta and then went on to make Top 4 at Paris later in the season. The road to his Houston performance is dotted with winning the **Magic** Invitational, conquering the first Team Pro Tour with YMG, and making Top 8 at New Orleans last year. Consistency is often gauged in short runs, but Kastle has a lifetime of it. This Top 4 couldn't have come at a better time, with a mediocre year threatening to throw Kastle from the train.

The wide-open field at Houston had a lot of people looking at "The Rock", the green-black control deck christened by Sol Malka. No surprise, then, that Kastle should lead the standings with it, since he was one of the pioneers of that style of deck. After an incredible 10-0 run, Kastle scooped to teammate and eventual champion Justin Gary, then made it interesting by dropping two straight matches before a round fourteen victory secured his place in the Top 8. For Kastle, it was another public affirmation of what he knew he was capable of all along.

John Larkin

Going into the Top 8, John Larkin was the clear fan-favorite. The charmingly outspoken man from Ireland had the biggest crowds hanging over the rails to watch his games, and when he came back from a 2-1 deficit against Myrvig, the roar of applause echoed throughout the hall. After he was bested by Justin Gary, it seemed like everyone wanted to shake his hand and offer consolations.

Larkin is very much the working man's pro. Last year he skipped three Pro Tours because he was too busy with school. Now that he's graduated, he works six-day weeks so that he'll have enough time off to attend all the big events. Having an actual career as well as one as a **Magic** player is demanding, but Larkin wouldn't have it any other way.

"I definitely don't want to be a professional **Magic** player," Larkin says. "I've always considered **Magic** a hobby. You know, go to Pro Tours for a laugh, for a good time. If you don't do well, no big deal."

In fact, he almost gave it up. Facing the end of his schooling, he decided he would run Euros and Worlds, and if he did well he'd play dedicated for a year and try to get on the Masters. If not, he wouldn't break his back trying to stay on the Tour. A Top 8 at Worlds later, he joined up with the Germans and Gary Wise, longtime friends from the days of the European Alliance, to prep for Houston. Their blue-black reanimator may not have put Kai in Day 2, but Larkin is convinced it was the right call, capable of powerful draws against the best decks and exploiting the format's defining cards: Duress, Vampiric Tutor and Cabal Therapy. His Top 4 almost guarantees he'll meet his goal. Already his 35 points gives him a good shot at the Chicago Masters.

Peter Myrvig

Peter Myrvig describes himself as an on-again, off-again Pro Tour player. He's been to the Tour a number of times, but never earned the big success to keep him there. Time and again, though, he's run the qualifier gauntlet to get back on. His perseverance finally paid off today. He cuts an imposing figure, standing almost a head taller than most of the players, and he's far from scrawny. All the same, he's very reserved and short-spoken, preferring to let others do the talking.

For this event, he worked mostly with players from around Denmark. It was tough for him to get a ton of playtesting done, though, because he lives in an area that isn't exactly choked with talent. Still, he met with the best at regular intervals and talked tech on a mailing list. As the day of the tournament drew closer, he was still unsure what he'd be playing.

Flying out of his native Denmark, he and his crew were stranded at an airport when they missed a connecting flight. Myrvig used the time to think about the upcoming tournament. He needed a deck that would beat The Rock and "Reanimator". He fiddled with Psychatog and, after a few quick games, was convinced it was the deck he was looking for. The huge wait turned out to be a blessing in disguise. All the same, he'd rather have arrived on time and made the Masters Gateway. "It was my first time on Air France," he said. "Also my last."

Mattias Jorstedt

For Jorstedt, this Top 8 is the highlight of his career. Currently pursuing his Masters in Computer Science, the fresh-faced young man from Sweden has been playing professionally for some time now, competing in fifteen Pro Tours. He's even enjoyed success, including a Top 8 at Euros and a Pro Tour Top 16, but he's hidden in the shadows of his Punisher teammates Tomi Walamies and Jens Thorén. Until now.

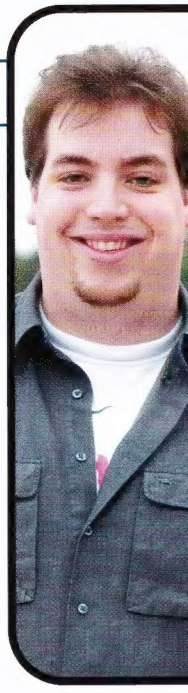
A longtime fan of combo decks (he made the Top 8 of Euros running the combo deck "Altar of Drake"), he fell in love with the Aluren deck early in testing and helped refine it. Even after his run through the Swiss, he wasn't sure if he'd tuned it to the optimal configuration, but he has no doubt that their version was very powerful and a good choice—four of the six players running it finished in the money. His enthusiasm was not diminished by a 3-0 quarterfinal drubbing by Darwin Kastle. He's thrilled to have made the final day. "It feels like it's paid off. Before, you know, I'd get to travel to all these cool places and make enough money to cover my expenses. This time, though, it's nice to finally get some recognition."

Bob Maher

He's not called The Great One for nothing. A few years ago, he was Player of the Year, having won Pro Tour–Chicago to the cheers of his many supporters. He was made notorious by his six-month suspension for blowing the whistle on a ratings-fixing scam from early in his career. Ask almost anyone, though—he's "one of the good guys."

The past months have seen him step up his game tremendously. He teamed with Neil Reeves and Gary Wise as Courtney's Boys at Pro Tour–Boston and earned a Top 4. He crossed the Atlantic to play at Grand Prix–Copenhagen and won the whole thing, and then finished ninth at Grand Prix–Philadelphia. People are already predicting another Player of the Year title for him. Maher cites heavy playtesting and a lot of support from his wife Courtney as the reasons for his success.

His deck, "Angry Hermit Part II," was courtesy of a hookup from the Dutch. At first, it looked like a stack of random bad rares. Then it was the deck that mulliganed into more mulligans. Closer examination showed it to be a deck that cranked out third-turn kills, and Maher was sold. His expert play carried him to his fourth Pro Tour Top 8.



Jeroen Remie

It's been a big year for The Netherlands's Jeroen Remie. A Top 32 at Pro Tour–San Diego. A Top 32 at Pro Tour–Nice. Fifteenth place at Euros. Tenth place at Worlds. And all of that leading up to this weekend, where he finally cracked a Top 8. For someone with just eight Tours under their belt, that's an impressive list.

Working alongside Victor van den Broek and Jelger Wiegersma, Remie wasn't confident coming into the tournament. Said Remie "I'm not that good at Constructed—that's why I skipped Osaka," with a bit of a laugh and a shrug at his recent success. He chose The Rock because he wanted to play forests (all his best results are green-based). He went 2-4 with Psychatog at Worlds, and his team was pushing to play monoblack control. Remie audibled to blue-green and went 6-0. His choice to play Rock wasn't really metagame-driven. He felt the field was wide-open, and that you should play the best deck that suited your style. It worked for him, despite starting the weekend 0-2-1. Now he's on the Masters and looking forward to the coming season. He's even going to Japan. "Of course, this year it's Limited."

Final Standings

Rank	Name	Prize
1	Justin Gary	$30,000
2	Robert Dougherty	$20,000
3	Darwin Kastle	$15,000
4	John Larkin	$13,000
5	Peter Myrvig	$9,500
6	Mattias Jorstedt	$8,500
7	Bob Maher	$7,500
8	Jeroen Remie	$6,500
9	Kyle Rose	$6,000
10	Nicolas Labarre	$5,500
11	Matthew Ranks	$5,000
12	Akira Asahara	$4,500
13	Jun Ishihara	$4,100
14	Dario Minieri	$3,800
15	Eivind Nitter	$3,500
16	Ruud Warmenhoven	$3,250
17	Alex Bakopoulos	$3,000
18	Itaru Ishida	$2,750
19	Markus Bell	$2,550
20	Kamiel Cornelissen	$2,400
21	Tomas Krejsa	$2,250
22	Rui Mariani	$2,100
23	Dirk Baberowski	$2,000
24	Jinpei Hassaku	$1,900
25	Markus Joebstl	$1,800
26	Jeff Cunningham	$1,700
27	Tuomas Kotiranta	$1,600
28	Gabriel Tsang	$1,500
29	Matt Linde	$1,400
30	Craig Stevenson	$1,350
31	Mike Hron	$1,300
32	Gabriel Carleton-Barnes	$1,250
33	Ben Stark	$1,200
34	Roger Sorino	$1,150
35	Jon Kosmidis	$1,100
36	Franck Canu	$1,050
37	Victor Galimbertti	$1,000
38	Thomas Guevin	$950
39	Diego Ostrovich	$900
40	Evgeny Golobrosdky	$875
41	Omar Sagol	$850
42	Ben Rubin	$825
43	Peter Guevin	$800
44	Johan Sadeghpour	$775
45	Reinhard Blech	$750
46	Ken Krouner	$730
47	Chris DeMaci	$710
48	Endre H Skjetne	$690
49	Roc Herms	$675
50	Francisco Barboza	$660
51	John Eardley	$645
52	Marco Blume	$630
53	Jon Finkel	$615
54	Gabriel Nassif	$600
55	Mark Ziegner	$590
56	Chris Senhouse	$580
57	Alexander Witt	$570
58	Jussi Perälä	$560
59	Ricardo Duarte	$550
60	Eugene Harvey	$540
61	Jelger Wiegersma	$530
62	Brett Shears	$520
63	Mattias Kettil	$510
64	Jin Okamoto	$500
65	Patrick Mello	
66	David Brucker	
67	Florent Jeudon	
68	Joshua Marick	
69	Gabe Walls	
70	Daniel Krutil	
71	Jonathan Pechon	
72	Takao Higaki	
73	Michael Turian	
74	Michael Dove	
75	Jeff Fung	
76	Rickard Österberg	
77	Hideki Komiyama	
78	Francesco Sabbatini	
79	Olivier Ruel	
80	Antoine Ruel	
81	Andrew Wolf	
82	Scott Seville	
83	Christoph Hölzl	
84	Nicholas Clark	
85	Carlos Eduardo Romao	
86	Kazuya Terasawa	
87	Tom Martell	
88	Joel Frank	
89	Mattias Wåglin	
90	Jimbob Sixkiller	
91	Bill Stead	
92	Anthony Menzer	
93	Matthias Braun	
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107	Wessel Oomens	
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110	Matthew Rubin	
111	Travis Turning	
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113	Gabriel Michelena	
114	Michael Bower	
115	Antonio Powell	
116	Bernardo Da Costa Cabral	
117	David Stanford	
118	Kai Budde	
119	Frederic Courtois	
120	Noah Boeken	
121	Matt Johnson	
122	Charles Gindy	
123	Tomi Walamies	
124	Frederico Bastos	
125	Matias Gabrenja	
126	Damiano Marchetti	
127	Davy Loeb	
128	Craig Krempals	
129	Pawel Sierocinski	
130	Daniel Martin	
131	Blake Quelle	
132	Pau Ochoa	
133	Alex Yatsenko	
134	Nobuhiro Andou	
135	Milton Figueroa	
136	Oyvind Odegaard	
137	Antoine Menard	
138	Allan Shuldiner	
139	Zvi Mowshowitz	
140	Antonino De Rosa	
141	Rick Chong	
142	Sol Malka	
143	Mark Herberholz	
144	Christophe Haim	
145	Raul Mestre	
146	Dario Cuomo	
147	Bas Postema	
148	Brandon Valera	
149	Phillip Scheneke	
150	Osyp Lebedowicz	
151	Danny Mandel	
152	Jon Stern	
153	Steven Wolfman	
154	Iwan Tan	
155	Taylor Parnell	
156	Carl Lobato	
157	Bryce Currence	
158	Brian Kibler	
159	Scott Lipp	
160	Adam Prosak	
161	Gary Rush	
162	Jose Capdevila	
163	Christopher Leather	
164	Matt Sperling	
165	Raffaele Lo Moro	
166	John Marat	
167	Fredrik Boberg	
168	Daniele Canavesi	
169	Brian Plumb	
170	Andrea Santin	
171	Gabriel Caligaris	
172	Patrick Chapin	
173	Thomas Refsdal	
174	Steven Long	
175	Morgan Karlsson	
176	Bryan Lyons	
177	Dario Parazzoli	
178	Jonas Cleeman	
179	Felix Schneiders	
180	Michael Williamson	
181	Richard Cline	
182	Jed Dolbeer	
183	Jeremy Pinter	
184	Paolo Luini	
185	David Humpherys	
186	Arjan van Leeuwen	
187	Masashi Ooiso	
188	Leonardo Uzcategui	
189	Brooks Rhodes	
190	Alex Prieto	
191	Eric Ziegler	
192	Aniol Alcaraz	
193	Christophe Torng	
194	Douglas Conway	
195	Tim Krzywicki	
196	Brian Kowal	
197	Mauro Bongiovanni	
198	Wenzel Krautmann	
199	Arndt Meier	
200	Jim Mason	
201	Amiel Tenenbaum	
202	Neil Reeves	
203	Raphael Levy	
204	Jan Holland	
205	Eric Taylor	
206	Camille Gleizes	
207	Jean Charles Salvin	
208	Jonathan Job	
209	Ming Huang Royce Chai	
210	Satoshi Nakamura	
211	Tiago Chan	
212	David Ball	
213	Kenneth Madsen	
214	Steve Easton	
215	Takashi Niwa	
216	Gerard Fabiano	
217	Lawrence Creech	
218	Matt Johnson	
219	Gary Talim	
220	Shin'ichi Kumagai	
221	Hiroshi Harada	
222	Allan Christensen	
223	Loic Degrou	
224	Vincent Barnette	
225	Brian Lynch	
226	Gerard Garcia	
227	Ken Bearl	
228	Stephen Cassell	
229	Matthew Vail	
230	Geoffrey Siron	
231	Luis Van Riet	
232	Phuong Tran	
233	Pieter Loubser	
234	Lucas Duchow	
235	Haakon Monsen	
236	Simon Hockwin	
237	Anton Jonsson	
238	Jeremy Bright	
239	Pierre Malherbaud	
240	William Jensen	
241	Sylvain Lauriol	
242	Tony Chia Min Hsu	
243	Zachary Parker	
244	Brian Davis	
245	Stephan Genser	
246	Scott McCord	
247	Hisatomo Nakashima	
248	Peter Gysemans	
249	Jens Thoren	
250	Thomas Gundersen	
251	Alessandro Betti	
252	Nuno Costa	
253	David Grant	
254	Josh Napper	
255	Antonio Fernandez	
256	Geoffrey Kirsch	
257	Andi Lee	
258	Andrew Stokinger	
259	Edward Ross	
260	Filippo Rivetti	
261	Benjamin Caumes	
262	Jun Nobushita	
263	Carlos Chadha	
264	Ricardo del Castillo	
265	Shawn Lambeth	
266	John Wiseman	
267	Martin Eidam	
268	Gerry Thompson	
269	Chris Benafel	
270	Nick Wilbur	
271	Justin Bing	
272	Guillaume Daoust	
273	Christian Robertsen	
274	Quentin Martin	
275	Michael Bernat	
276	Dan Jenkins	
277	William Postlethwait	
278	Brian Smith	
279	Pekka Lepisto	
280	Marco Dolazza	
281	Sam Gomersall	
282	Bryan Hubble	
283	Christoph Lippert	
284	David Williams	
285	Patrick Sullivan	
286	Ken Ho	
287	Roberto Gonzales	
288	Rouwen Korzetz	
289	Reiji Andou	
290	Eric Froehlich	
291	Charlie Von Haden	
292	Zev Gurwitz	
293	Mikko Punakallio	
294	John Ryan Golden	
295	Daniel O'Brien	
296	David Connell	
297	Federico Stivoli	
298	Abraham Snepvangers	
299	Francesco Berti	
300	Matthew Schempp	
301	Luis Sousa	
302	Christopher Donn	
303	Christopher McGuire	
304	Marc Burns	
305	Adrian Sayers	
306	Jeffrey Auer	
307	David Price	
308	Jeffrey Magid	
309	Daniel Vaughn	
310	Victor van den Broek	
311	Gerardo Godinez-Estrada	
312	Farid Meraghni	
313	Nico Wendt	
314	Jason Galut	
315	Caleb Hames	
316	Nathan Zamora	
317	Mark A. Kikta	
318	Aik Seng Khoo	
319	Roman Weidemann	
320	Mike Thompson	
321	Arne Norton	
322	Alex Shvartsman	
323	Stefano Gattolin	
324	Pavlos Akritas	
325	Matt Henstra	
326	Andre Barreto	
327	Karim Aouidad	
328	Garrett Schaper	
329	Stuart Wright	
330	Nicolai Herzog	
331	Joseph Crosby	
332	Vincent Los	
333	Jeff Lambert	
334	Charles Bosse	
335	Alex Lieberman	
336	Joseph Gary Wise	
337	Ped Bunsongsikud	
338	Steven Livingston	
339	Frank Karsten	
340	Juan Carlos Mejias	
341	Jose Barbero	
342	David Rood	
343	David Saylor	
344	Peter Szigeti	
345	Adam Horvath	
346	Tommaso Natale	
347	Elijah Pollock	
348	Adam Bernstein	
349	Franck Claerhout	
350	Lan Ho	
351	Luca Chiera	

Rookie of the Year Race

through Pro Tour–Houston (November 10, 2002)

Rank	Name	Home Country	Points
1	Craig Krempals	United States	12
2	Masashi Ooiso	Japan	11
3	Karim Aouidad	France	10
3	Craig Stevenson	England	10
5	Stephen Cassell	Canada	8
5	Jun Ishihara	Japan	8
5	Shin'ichi Kumagai	Japan	8
8	Alex Bakopoulos	Greece	7
9	Fredrik Boberg	Sweden	6
9	Shaun Doran	United States	6
9	John Eardley	United States	6
9	Bret Herring	United States	6
9	Jun'ichi Kinoshita	Japan	6
9	Valentin Moskovich	United States	6
9	Matthew Schempp	United States	6
16	Ricardo Duarte	Portugal	5
16	Evgeny Golobrosdky	Israel	5
16	Jon Kosmidis	Greece	5
16	Davy Loeb	France	5
16	Adam Prosak	United States	5
16	Kazuya Terasawa	Japan	5
16	Nico Wendt	Germany	5
23	Eli Aden	United States	4
23	Nuno Costa	Portugal	4
23	Stephan Genser	Austria	4
23	Oyvind Harding	Norway	4
23	Rouwen Korzetz	Germany	4
23	Patrick Plößer	Germany	4
23	Gerry Thompson	United States	4
30	Nobuhiro Andou	Japan	3
30	Matthias Braun	Germany	3
30	Nicholas Clark	England	3
30	Bernardo Da Costa Cabral	Belgium	3
30	Asuka Doi	Japan	3
30	Emanuele Giacolini Sr.	Italy	3
30	Charles Gindy	United States	3
30	Yuuta Hirosawa	Japan	3
30	Kenji Kimoto	Japan	3
30	Hideki Kobayashi	Japan	3
30	Hideki Komiyama	Japan	3
30	Daniel Krutil	Czech Republic	3
30	Damiano Marchetti	Italy	3
30	Joshua Marick	United States	3
30	Eiji Nomura	Japan	3
30	Bastien Perez	France	3
30	Oscar Perez paez	Spain	3
30	Antonio Powell	United States	3
30	Francesco Sabbatini	Italy	3
30	Dennis Schmitz	Germany	3
30	Nobuaki Shikata	Japan	3
30	Piotr Sienko	Poland	3
30	Pawel Sierocinski	Poland	3
30	Jimbob Sixkiller	United States	3
30	David Stanford	United States	3
30	Yuuichi Takasaki	Japan	3
30	Kazuki Ueno	Japan	3
30	Pedro Velhinho	Portugal	3

Player of the Year Race

through Pro Tour–Houston (November 10, 2002)

Rank	Name	Home Country	Points
1	Justin Gary	United States	36
2	Dirk Baberowski	Germany	34
3	Bob Maher	United States	33
4	Kai Budde	Germany	31
5	Robert Dougherty	United States	29
6	Marco Blume	Germany	28
7	David Rood	Canada	22
8	John Larkin	Ireland	20
8	Elijah Pollock	Canada	20
8	Steven Wolfman	Canada	20
11	Darwin Kastle Mess	United States	19
12	Jeroen Remie	Netherlands	18
12	Joseph Gary Wise	Canada	18
14	Gerard Fabiano	United States	16
14	Eivind Nitter	Norway	16
14	Jonathan Sonne	United States	16
17	Jin Okamoto	Japan	15
17	Gabriel Tsang	Canada	15
19	Jeff Cunningham	Canada	14
19	Florent Jeudon	France	14
19	Scott McCord	United States	14
19	Peter Myrvig	Denmark	14
19	Neil Reeves	United States	14
19	Jelger Wiegersma	Netherlands	14
25	Itaru Ishida	Japan	13
25	Mattias Jorstedt	Sweden	13
25	Nicolas Labarre	France	13
25	Dario Minieri	Italy	13
29	Tsuyoshi Ikeda	Japan	12
29	Craig Krempals	United States	12
29	Olivier Ruel	France	12
32	Peter Guevin	United States	11
32	Thomas Guevin	United States	11
32	Pierre Malherbaud	France	11
32	Masashi Ooiso	Japan	11
32	Antoine Ruel	France	11
32	Endre H Skjetne	Norway	11
32	Patrick Sullivan	United States	11
39	Karim Aouidad	France	10
39	Akira Asahara	Japan	10
39	Kamiel Cornelissen	Netherlands	10
39	Nicolai Herzog	Norway	10
39	Markus Joebstl	Austria	10
39	Frank Karsten	Netherlands	10
39	Jun Nobushita	Japan	10
39	Matthew Ranks	United States	10
39	Kyle Rose	United States	10
39	Craig Stevenson	England	10
39	Victor van den Broek	Netherlands	10
39	Ruud Warmenhoven	Netherlands	10
39	Alexander Witt	Netherlands	10
52	Franck Canu	France	9
52	Christophe Haim	France	9
52	Adam Horvath	United States	9
52	Jens Krause	Germany	9
52	Danny Mandel	United States	9
52	Wessel Oomens	Netherlands	9

Tournament Manager	Head Judge	Scorekeeper	Judge Certification
Jeff Donais (5)	Rune Horvik (4)	Kevin Endo	Shawn Doherty (3)

Judges

Mark Rosewater (4)	Damien Guillemard (2)	Matt Villamaino (2)
Mike Donais (4)	David Hibbs (2)	Mike King (2)
Douglas Saadeh (3)	David Welsh (2)	Mike Ritthirak (2)
Justus Ronnau (3)	Doug Montalvo (2)	Miki Urban (2)
Marc Hernandez (3)	Eric Bess (2)	Paul Schumacher (2)
Paul Barclay (3)	Gabriel Gaulet (2)	Scott Marshall (2)
B Tucker (2)	Jim Shuman (2)	Yu Kanazawa (2)
Ben Drago (2)	Lubos Lauer (2)	John Cross (1)
Chief (2)	Matt Tabak (2)	

Houston Masters

Jens Thorén Wins Masters

Beats Gary Wise in Finals

by Brian David-Marshall

The Masters Series is the goal of every aspiring professional **Magic** player. The individual events guarantee a payday of $2,000 just for sitting at the table. Each single elimination victory multiplies that number, with a top prize of $25,000. The format for the Masters Series event in Houston was the still-nascent *Onslaught* Booster Draft, but before anyone could get down to the business of cracking packs, the identities of four of the drafters had to be determined.

This was the first Masters event where DCI rating couldn't earn you a berth in the tournament. Instead, the Gateway tournament would be open to all players with a 1900-or-better Limited rating, and four players would advance to the 32-person main event. More than 150 players with the requisite rating arrived early Thursday morning to attempt to grind in. This meant three rounds of Sealed Deck were required to pare down the field to four eight-person draft pods. The winner of each pod advanced to the Masters, while the other seven players received nothing but the rares they drafted.

The feel-good story of the tournament was Allan Shuldiner, who was playing in his first Pro Tour the very next day. Technically, he was still an Amateur when he faced seasoned veteran Ben Rubin to determine who would advance from their pod. Shuldiner won and had to face a first-round opponent named Kai Budde—perhaps you've heard of him. Allan won that round as well, but his dream run was derailed by Gary Wise, who would go on to—but I'm getting ahead of myself.

The other three slots were won by players as different as the countries they hail from. American Peter Szigeti (a.k.a. PTR) is one of the loudest and brashest players on the Pro Tour. Japan's Itaru Ishida is as stoic in victory as in defeat. France's Christopher Haim is a free spirit who was in the middle of a cross-country journey that began with Grand Prix–Philadelphia and will end in Los Angeles.

They rounded out a 32-person event that read like a "Who's Who" of **Magic**. In addition to the four weary Gateway players, you could find World Champion Carlos Romão; Phoenix Foundation and Pro Tour–Boston winners Kai Budde, Marco Blume, and Dirk Baberoski; crowd favorites Mike Pustilnik and Tomi Walamies; Your Move Games teammates Rob Dougherty and Dave Humphries; and even *Sideboard* writers Alex Shvartsman, Brian Kibler, and Gary Wise.

The players were sorted into eight-person draft pods, with the Top 2 players from each pod advancing to the Top 8—one draft table with all eyes on the $25,000 prize. When the dust of the first two rounds settled, the quarterfinal matchups took shape as follows:

Eric Froehlich squared off against Jelger Wiegersma in a battle of green-red decks. Both decks were heavy on creatures and light on removal, but Froehlich had the devastating uncommon Slice and Dice at his disposal where Wiegersma had Pinpoint Avalanche. Froehlich advanced to the semis.

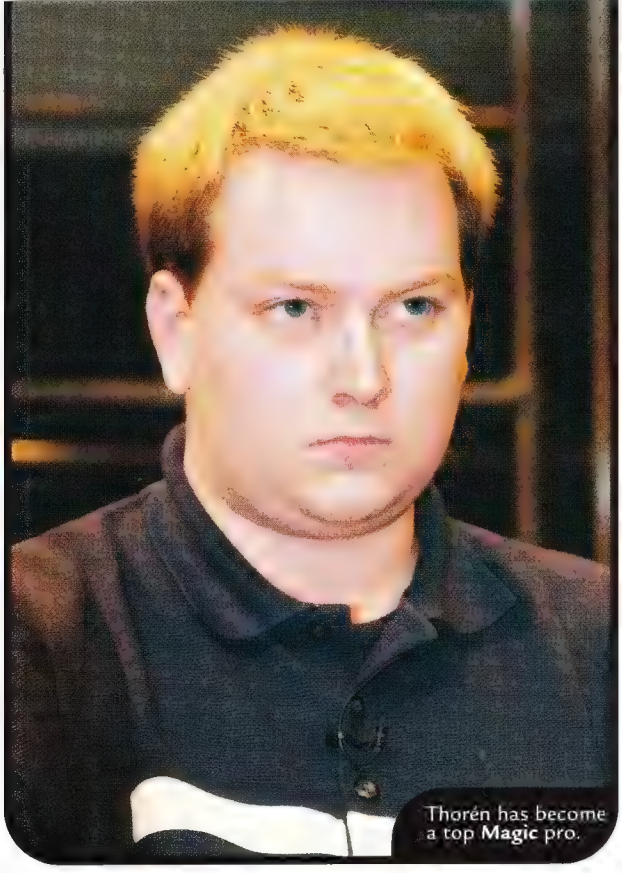
Jens Thorén's deck was a veritable trade binder of red rares. His creatures included the nearly-unkillable Tephraderm, the perplexing Menacing Ogre, and the game-ending Butcher Orgg. In case that wasn't enough, he also had the board-clearing Starstorm. His quarterfinal opponent, Alex Shvartsman, had a few unkillable rares of his own—Gigapede and Silvos, Rogue Elemental. Thorén was able to advance to the semis thanks to yet another rare—Cover of Darkness—that made his Beasts unblockable.

Gary Wise drafted a blue-white deck with no real removal except for two Pacifisms. He could steal his opponent's best creatures with Blatant Thievery and the less-blatant Clone. Eivind Nitter drafted the antithesis of Gary's deck: black-red with a handful of removal spells to clear the way for his Grinning Demon. To finish things off, Nitter had the "I win!" card, Insurrection. Nitter never got to say those words, as Wise took the match in two games.

Raphael Levy and Anton Jonsson found themselves in the black-white mirror match in the last quarterfinal. The decks seemed evenly matched, with Jonsson heavily into Clerics and Levy sporting Soldiers. In the end, Catapult Squad backed up by Sigil of the New Dawn assured Levy would advance.

Thorén and Froehlich met in the semifinals, where the matchup seemed to favor Thorén. Froehlich's

Wise and Thorén showed good sportsmanship throughout the event.



Thorén has become a top **Magic** pro.

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deck was capable of a fast start with multiple Elvish Warriors and inexpensive Beasts, but Thorén had some decent early drops like Goblin Sledder and Festering Goblin to buy him time to find his power rares. In the first game, Froehlich didn't find any green mana until late in the game with a hand that included Krosan Tusker and a fistful of Elves. He tried to buy time with morph guys, but a fifth-turn Menacing Ogre presented him with a difficult decision. If he bid too little life, Thorén would have a 5/5 trampler with haste that he had no way to deal with. He won the bid at the cost of 6 life and a 3 point hit from the hasty Ogre before he could untap and kill it with Solar Blast. Thorén kept up the pressure, sending them to game two.

Game two saw Froehlich draw only forests; he had to use his third turn to cycle his Tusker for a mountain. Thorén's deck never let up, removing all of Froehlich's threats. He didn't even need the Starstorm and Butcher Orgg he was holding at the end of the game to advance to the finals.

On the other side of the Feature Match Area, Gary Wise and Raphael Levy scuffled to see who would face Thorén in the finals. Wise went down three cards early when he declined to block a face-down Haunted Cadaver. His only card remaining was the 3/3 Mistform Shrieker, and he peeled the fifth land he needed to play it off the top of his deck. Eventually, Levy played a Catapult Squad and a string of Daru Cavaliers. With a total of four Soldiers in play, Levy could deal 4 to the Shrieker, which had eaten up most of his life total. The momentum of the game was starting to swing back when he began attacking with a 6/5 Prowling Pangolin. That came to a halt when Wise played a Daunting Defender. Thanks to the Mistform Shrieker's ability to change its creature type to Cleric, the lethal 4 points of damage from the Catapult Squad's two activations was reduced to a survivable 2 points, and Wise was halfway to the finals.

Game two saw a morphed Mistform Shrieker get Smothered, but Wise was the only blue drafter in the Top 8, so he had another one. What looked like an early advantage for Levy was negated by a full strength Choking Tethers that allowed Wise back in the race. Once again, things were looking good for Levy when he played Dirge of Dread and sent his team in for the win, but Wise wasn't out of tricks. He played Oblation, shuffling Levy's most dangerous creature—Prowling Pangolin—back into his deck and surviving the attack. Levy then made a costly mistake, playing his second land for the turn. He was given a game loss, and Wise advanced to the finals against Thorén's potent black-red deck.

Thorén was fresh off of winning the Invitational over Punisher teammate Tomi Walamies and was in the midst of a year including multiple Pro Tour Top 8 finishes.

Wise was not doing so bad himself. With teammates Neil Reeves and Bob Maher, Wise added another team Pro Tour Top 4 to his resume and was about to put his money where his virtual mouth was. Just prior to this event, Wise wrote an article naming blue as a viable draft strategy for *Onslaught* Limited. It had carried him to the finals, but would it be enough to defeat a black-red deck with mass removal and bomb creatures?

The players were given access to each other's decklists the night before the finals, and Wise felt he had the answers to the questions posed by Thorén's deck. Multiple Pacifisms dealt with huge creatures like Butcher Orgg and Tephraderm while leaving then around for his Clone to copy. If the game went long enough, Blatant Thievery would take Thorén's best man. After sideboarding, Wise felt that Crown of Awe and Discombobulate swung things heavily in his favor.

Game one proved to be frustrating for Wise as he never saw any white mana and was beaten rather handily by Starstorm, Tephraderm, and Nantuko Husk. Game two was a longer affair with the same result. Wise had a Mistform Dreamer on the offense and played an Ascending Aven on turn four that was unable to block Thorén's morphed guy. Predictably, it was a Skirk Commando which killed the Aven. Undaunted, Wise continued to attack and tapped out to played a Mistform Shrieker. Thorén enchanted it with Crown of Suspicion, killing the Shrieker's little brother and forcing Wise to trade with the Skirk Commando. Wise eventually got his sideboarded Crown of Awe into play, but he was down too many cards, and Thorén was able to Alpha Strike him to a low enough life total for a lowly Shepherd of Rot to finish him off.

Thorén emerged as the Houston Masters champion and earned a check for $25,000! Don't feel too bad for Wise, though, as his check came out to $15,000 for blue's coming out party. On an interesting side note, Wise's roommate for the weekend was John Larkin, whose check for his Top 4 finish on the Pro Tour came out to $13,000, bringing the room's total to $28,000—assuredly more than any room that didn't have black shirts with red dragons hanging in the closet.

Wise followed up his blue drafting article on **Sideboard.com** with $15,000 worth of proof.

Phoenix Foundation Wins Again

Team Stays Undefeated in Team Rochester

by Josh Bennett

Who else could it be? Team Rochester is universally considered the game's most skill-intensive format—who do you think would take home the title? Bear in mind that Kai Budde had just led the German national team to gold at Worlds. Add to that the fact that he, Baberowski, and Blume were defending Team Limited champs. When they were handed the trophies at the end of the tournament, it seemed more an affirmation than an achievement. Phoenix Foundation is the best. Everyone else was fighting for second place.

The night before was the mayhem of the last-chance qualifier. As the start time drew close, there were just nine teams waiting for their chance at one of two slots, but the schedule was pushed back to accommodate an additional 21 teams caught in freeway traffic. The heavyweight team was Hood Rich: Dave Williams, Chris Benafel, and Pat Chapin. They cruised to a slot, joined by Inferior Human-Controlled Slimes (Guillaume Daoust, Jon Stern, Serge Levert).

The first day was the Sealed gauntlet, and no one was looking forward to it. Where Team Rochester is called the most skill-based of **Magic**'s formats, Team Sealed is not given the same respect. Not that it's a lottery to see who gets into Day 2—the construction and play mean the difference between a win and a loss. It's just that sometimes you're handed fewer tools than you'd like. Players worked hard to get whatever edge they could out of their builds, but it didn't seem like there were color preferences for the different seats, so strategic placement wasn't really possible. Many complained that their matches came down to which team got favorable pair-ups.

Undefeated after six rounds were Courtney's Boys, the mercenary team that merged the formidable talents of Bob Maher Jr., Gary Wise, and Neil Reeves. On paper, they're one of the mightiest groups out there. Maher's Pro Tour and Grand Prix titles speak of skills that are clearly no worse off for his six-month suspension. Wise is playing some of the best **Magic** of his career, narrowly missing a Top 8 at Osaka and finishing Top 32 at Worlds in Sydney. Reeves, the least known of their group, made the Top 8 at San Diego this year and has his name bounced around discussions of "America's Top Limited Players."

Right behind them at 5-0-1 were Slay, Pillage, Gerard, the restructured version of last year's sixth-place finishers Slay-Pillage-Massacre. Jon Sonne and Scott McCord had to drop teammate Eric Ziegler when he decided he couldn't handle the demands of playtesting, and they picked up hot commodity Gerard Fabiano in his stead. The new team clicked immediately, and the results were plain to see. Also in position for a better-than-repeat performance were Stalking Tiger, Hidden Gibbon, composed of Josh Ravitz, Matt Urban, and Paul Jordan. The boys from Jersey were within one match win of the Top 4 at New York last year, and came back stronger than ever. Both teams demonstrate that celebrity is no substitute for hard work.

Back: Slay, Pillage, Gerard; 2020; Phoenix Foundation; Front: Courtney's Boys

Though the Americans were on top (Wise honorarily so), Europe was out in force. Norway's Team Outland played a strange gambit, splitting their team up to send two arguably weaker teams. It worked. Both Plan 9 from Outland and Team Outland 2002 cruised into Day 2. Dutch powerhouse team www.star-maker.nl/lap (Frank Karsten, Victor van den Broek, Jelger Wiegersma) were sitting pretty at 5-1. France blew them both away by sending a whopping six teams to the draft tables, headed by the Ruels and Florent Jeudon, now called Hobby One instead of Black Ops. However, none of the six were Turbo Petradon,

the fusion of last year's finalists Les Plus Class with Rookie of the Year Farid Meraghni.

In fact, a lot of the bigger names would be playing in the *Onslaught* Prerelease instead of the Tour. Hometown heroes Your Move Games managed only two wins on the day. Ditto for Brian Kibler, Ben Rubin, and Ken Ho, the misnamed Übermenschen. Jon Finkel's collaboration with Peter Szigeti and Svend Geertsen bore bitter 3-3 fruit, and the CMU superteam TOGIT Connection (Eugene Harvey, Mike Turian, Osyp Lebedowicz) posted only 3-2-1. Phoenix Foundation and Illuminati (Zvi Mowshowitz, Alex Shvartsman, Justin Gary) barely squeaked in at 4-2, with the Foundation winning out from a precarious 2-2 start.

Day 2 arrived, and even the weather seemed to welcome the change to Rochester Draft. The sun was high and bright in the sky as the competitors, some more rested than others, took their places at the six-man tables. Just 40 teams remained for the five rounds of Swiss, and then the Top 4 would be decided. Even with two losses, Budde was optimistic. Of all the practice drafts he'd done the weekend before, and there were a lot of them, just two of them had Phoenix Foundation marking an "L". Everyone was mum on the subject of draft strategy. The legacy of Potato Nation and Car Acrobatic Team's one-two finish at New York 2000 had everyone looking for a way to derail conventional wisdom.

Certainly, *Torment* solidified the locations of colors for a lot of teams. Black desperately wanted to be in the A seat, to get maximum chances at Crippling Fatigues and Faceless Butchers. This usually led to it being paired with red, the better to deal with opposing Nightmares. From there, most teams would split blue, putting blue-white in the middle and blue-green on the end. As Day 2 progressed, another strategy emerged at the top tables. Slay, Pillage, Gerard and Phoenix Foundation sawed through the competition by putting blue-green in the middle seat, trumping blue-white with a tempo strategy, and playing an aggro red-white deck in the C seat.

With one round of play to go, it was a tight race. Courtney's Boys, Slay, Pillage, Gerard, and 2020 were tied up at 25 points. Just behind were www.star-maker.nl/lap and the indominable Phoenix Foundation, both with 24. Attack Time (the Guevins and Danny Mandel) were in striking distance at 23. 2020 and Slay, Pillage, Gerard drew to secure their spot, leaving the other four to fight it out.

Courtney's Boys drew the Dutch. They were confident at the close of the draft, but things got snarled in a hurry. It all came down to game one of Maher versus Wiegersma. One turn before the attrition would make it impossible, Maher drew Sonic Seizure to go with the Burning Wish in his hand. He Wished for Flash of Defiance, and between that, Sonic Seizure, and Grim Lavamancer, he was able to fight through for exactly lethal damage. Courtney's Boys were in the finals.

On the other side of the Feature Match Area, Attack Time squared off against Phoenix Foundation. The Foundation were 4-0 on the day and ready to make it five. Not even the antics of the irrepressible Tom Guevin could deter them. Attack Time were summarily outdrafted. Baberowski took his match quickly, and when Budde had his in the bag, he stuck the Circular Logic he held on his forehead, showing Guevin exactly how many outs he had. With that, the four who would fight for the title were decided. It would be a Day 3 with all the trimmings: The Smart Money, The All-Stars, Last Year's Near Miss, and The Underdogs. They left a seven-way tie for fifth in their wake.

Only a handful of spectators showed for the first drafts of Day 3. Slay, Pillage, Gerard had the dubious honor of facing the Foundation. Both were using the same winning strategy, and a few picks into the draft, it was clear that both would be sticking to their guns, trying for advantages across three mirrors. It was too close to call. Budde and Fabiano split their first two. Blume dropped his first to McCord. But then Baberowski rolled a mana-shy Sonne in their second game to take the match, and all could be determined by one game. It was a race, one Fabiano would win if only he drew his Churning Eddy. He had two turns, and they weren't enough.

Meanwhile, Courtney's Boys were enraged. They had drafted 2020 into terrible matchups color-wise, but had been out-opened like never before. Nevertheless, Reeves and Maher took the first two games with ease. Wolfman came through for the Canadians, and then Pollock and Rood followed his lead. Then Wolfman stole another from Wise, giving 2020 the first match win. One more game and they'd be in the finals. Rood and Reeves would fight first. Reeves was never off the back foot, and Cunning Wish for Lead Astray sealed the deal.

In the final draft, the Foundation stuck to their plan, while 2020 tried to adapt. It worked, to an extent, with the Baberowski-Wolfman matchup ending up in their favor, but the Budde-Rood match swung the other way. It all hinged on Blume-Pollock. They hoped Worldgorger Dragon and Flash of Defiance would give him the edge.

Baberowski fell quickly. His first game ended almost before the others had begun. Budde was quick to take a game from Rood, and then Blume bested Pollock despite Worldgorger Dragon. He turned and gave the high sign to Budde, who smiled. Budde turned back to Rood and said in a conspiratorial whisper "He's been having some trouble with trample lately." As Baberowski dropped his match, Blume took his. Budde v. Rood would be the last to play out. A cluttered board drew the match out, but eventually Narcissism, Repel, and Grizzly Fate put the pinch on Rood. Budde flashed that smile of certainty as he turned everyone sideways. Phoenix Foundation had done it again.

Pro Tour–Boston Champions

Phoenix Foundation

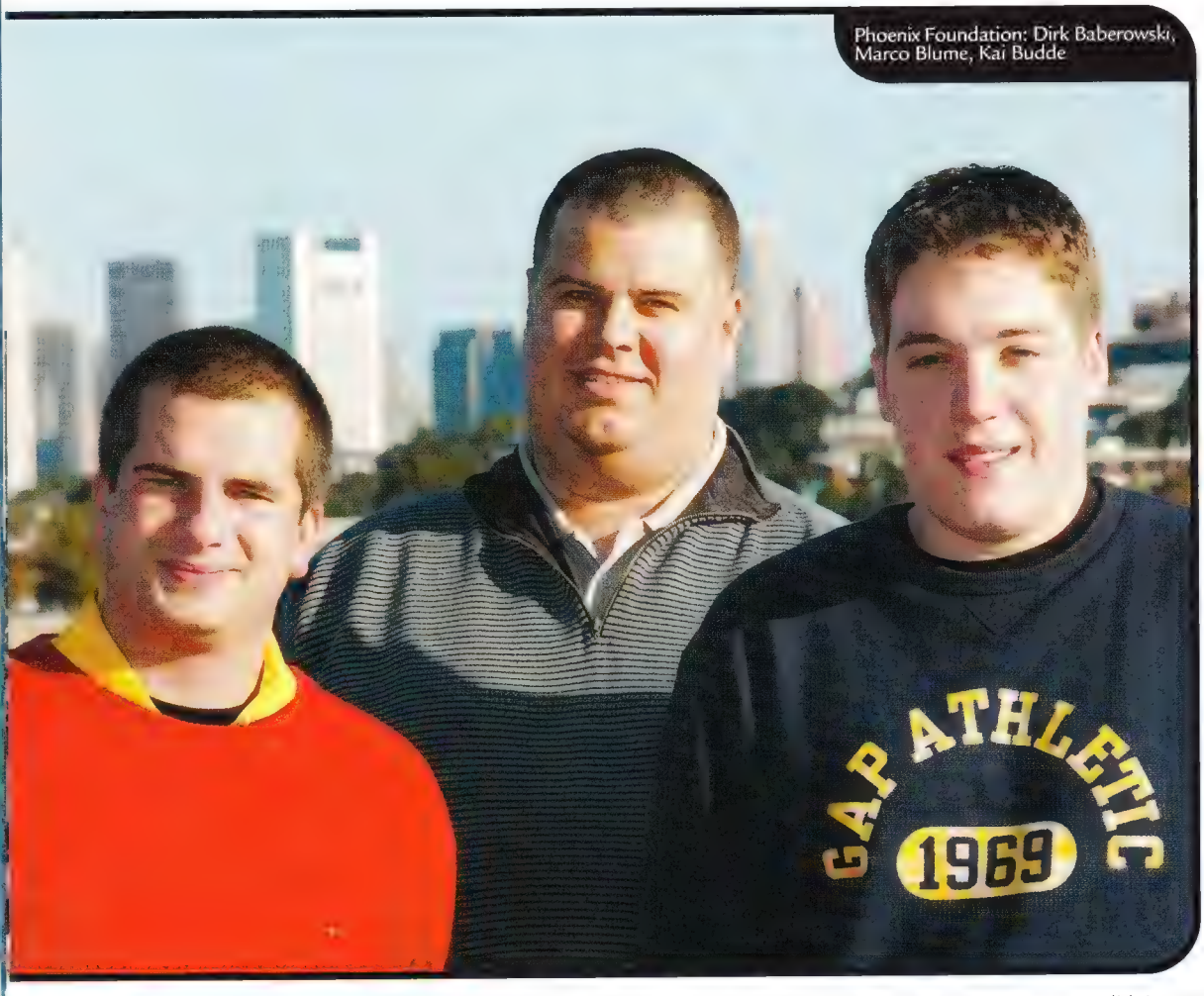
by Aaron Forsythe

With a win at Pro Tour–Boston, Phoenix Foundation—Kai Budde, Dirk Baberowski, and Marco Blume—continues to rewrite the record books for professional **Magic**. Peep these numbers: Kai now has six Pro Tour wins, twice as many as the next guy. "The next guy" is Baberowski, who has three wins. And the guy after that? Blume, whose two Pro Tour titles tie him for third place with Jon Finkel and Tommi Hovi. The Foundation also has the distinction of being undefeated in sanctioned Team Rochester, a streak that now spans two Pro Tours and a Masters competition.

In other words, it's impossible for this team to be any better.

Normally, a team profile such as this would start with a look at Kai. But if you read this magazine regularly, you already know all there is to know about the German Juggernaut, up to and including what he had for breakfast this morning. Besides, it should be evident to any Pro Tour aficionado that even though Kai is the marquee player on this squad, he isn't doing it alone; after all, Kai actually *lost a match* in this format at Worlds last year. So we'll start with the other two members . . .

Marco Blume is the quintessential gamer. He plays **Magic**, he plays online roleplaying games, and he even totes board games around with him to the Pro Tour. "Professional Team Player" is the term the 25-year-old Blume uses to describe himself. The money he has earned as a member of the Foundation has him leading the easy life, with little on his mind other than continuing to improve his game. And there isn't that much to improve—his resume includes 1999 German National Champion and Worlds Team Finalist that same year.



Phoenix Foundation: Dirk Baberowski, Marco Blume, Kai Budde

If Blume is the consummate gamer, Dirk Baberowski is just the opposite. Having tasted success immediately upon entering the pro scene by winning 1998 Pro Tour–Chicago, the first Tour stop he ever played at, Baberowski lost his fire for competition and shifted his priorities to the "real world," opening a travel agency. It seemed he was retired for good. But Kai Budde is as good a judge of talent as he is a player, and he knew that Dirk was the real deal. Kai dragged him out of retirement kicking and screaming, and the rest is history. Baberowski has recently started attending more events and is putting up the individual finishes everyone expected him to. At the time of this writing, he leads Budde in the Player of the Year race.

The story always comes back to Kai. For those of you unfamiliar with the man, here's the long and short of his career: World Champion in 1999. Winner of 2000 Pro Tour–Chicago. Winner of Pro Tour–Barcelona. Winner of Pro Tour–New Orleans. Winner of six individual Grand Prix events. German National Champion in 2002. Three-time Player of the Year. All-time money leader. It boggles the mind. Add in the two team wins and the smattering of events in which he's made the Top 8 and *not* won, and it's safe to say that Kai has proven that there is less luck in **Magic** than anyone previously believed.

So how did the German trio do it this time?

After using up their two allotted losses in the six sealed deck rounds, they found themselves in the unenviable position of needing to go 5-0 on Saturday in order to make the Top 4. But they were up for the challenge.

During their many hours of playtesting, they had determined ideal colors for each seat in the draft. Seat B (Kai) was almost always green-blue, which used threshold and madness as its main weapons. Seat A (Dirk) was firmly black, making the most of the black commons from *Torment*. And Seat C (Marco) was often white-red, a color combination that could win in two ways: hyper-aggressively with lots of sub-par cards like Crackling Club and Mystic Visionary, or slowly with Walls, defensive spells, and Chainflingers.

It didn't matter what their opponents did, generally, as the Foundation believed that the card quality gained by positioning the colors just so more than made up for any potential "bad matchups" they could be forced into. And they were right. Even when one of them was put on the spot by the opposition, the other two would somehow vindicate their teammate every time.

There is no better team, there may never be a better team, and until they break up, they have to be considered the odds-on favorite to win every event they play in. As a team, Phoenix Foundation is even better than Kai Budde is on his own.

Pro Tour–Boston Finalist

2020

by Josh Bennett

Every tournament has its Cinderella story. Going into Pro Tour–Boston, 2020 were called the third best Canadian team. Composed of Elijah Pollock, David Rood, and Steven Wolfman, 2020 was known but not expected to do well. After all, they had gotten to the tour courtesy of a Pro Tour Qualifier (PTQ). No, Canada's best hope was clearly Raw Dogs, with the star power of Gab Tsang, Jeff Cunningham, and honorary Canadian Brian Hacker. The fight for second was between 2020 and JJJ (Hoaen, Cassel, and Zajdner). When Raw Dogs failed to make the cut to Day 2, everyone assumed it was over for the red and white. Three drafts later, 2020 was in second place and on the way to the Top 4.

The most striking thing about the members of 2020 was their energy. Not only were they winning, but they were also feeling the full flush of every victory. A night's rest did little to calm them. They faced Courtney's Boys and were all smiles and nervous laughter. At one point, Pollock had to leave the Feature Match Area—he just couldn't watch the Rood-Reeves match with so much on the line. Even as they suffered defeat at the hands of Phoenix Foundation, the magnitude of what they'd accomplished kept their spirits high.

Though not seasoned veterans, 2020 wasn't exactly a ragtag gang of amateurs. Pollock enjoyed two Top 8's on the Junior Pro Tour before school commitments forced a two-year hiatus from the game. Post-graduation, however, he soon recovered his former skills. He's best recognized by his easygoing attitude and friendly smile. Even in the most demanding of matches, he was clearly enjoying himself.

Rood was on a big upswing. The headstrong rookie from Quebec had been posting consistent strong finishes on the North American Grand Prix circuit, and then reached the Top 4 at Canadian Nationals. Most recently, he'd put a lot of work into the *Odyssey* Block Constructed format, handing Toronto fixture Gab Tsang the deck that would carry him to a Top 2 finish at Grand Prix–Cleveland, where Rood finished eleventh. Where Pollock sports friendliness, Rood has a penchant for cockiness and sass-mouth—but that's outside of competition. In a match, he's all concentration, leaving his wisecracks at the door.

Pollock and Rood had teamed together a lot, but their original third had other plans this time around. With most of the Toronto pros already in teams, they recruited Steven Wolfman. It was more a question of convenience than anything else. Wolfman haunted the Top 8's of southern Ontario PTQs and had been to the Tour a few times, so it wasn't as if he didn't merit a place on the team. "It's funny," said Pollock, "We teamed with Steve [Wolfman] because he was available, and then he went 10-1 in the Swiss!" Wolfman, in his typical soft-spoken way, just shrugged and said, "I had a good day."

Following their qualification, they tore into their preparations. They did some Sealed Deck practice, drafted against the best they could find, and kept their ears open for any edge. Even the day before at Boston, they ignored the money-draft tables for more Team Rochester practice. They wanted to be in the best possible condition for the tournament. Their strategy was straightforward. Wolfman would draft black in seat A, joined with whatever color best thwarted the opposition. Rood, in the middle, would be blue-white. On the end, Pollock would take green and pair it with red or blue. It was straightforward, but it served them well.

Interestingly, success seemed to bring out the best in all of them. Rather than strain under the pressure, Wolfman's confidence swelled with each passing round. When Gary Wise tried to needle him before their Top 4 match, Wolfman just looked at him and laughed, saying, "We're gonna kick your a**." Even the bombastic Wise stumbled on his next barb, so shocked was he at the change. For Rood, it was humility. Awash in the moment, shoulder to shoulder with the big names, his blockbuster year evaporated from his memory. He took Budde's drubbing in the finals with a huge smile and a handshake.

They spent the rest of the day on cloud nine. Their accomplishment hadn't really set in. Pollock joked, "Maybe when I get the check." It looks like Boston will be the start of something great for the boys from Canada. Between the thrill, their winnings, and a spot on the Masters, the members of 2020 are more fired up than ever to make their mark on the Tour. With that much earnest potential, the year to come should be a good one.

2020: Elijah Pollock, David Rood, Steven Wolfman

Pro Tour–Boston Third Place

Courtney's Boys

by Aaron Forsythe

Two years ago, things went pretty much as Gary Wise had planned. The Canadian had one teammate—CMU's Mike Turian—already, and they chose former Pro Tour great Scott Johns as their third for the upcoming Team Pro Tour. That team, Potato Nation, was built with the goal of winning the event in mind, and after crushing just about every team they encountered, Wise and company took the title in New York.

This year, things weren't going as well for Wise. After failing to put up a good showing in the encore Team Pro Tour, Potato Nation officially disbanded. Johns retired from pro competition, and Turian was committed to his superstar roommate, Eugene Harvey. Wise was on his own.

His first option was to try to qualify alongside English deckbuilding savants John Ormerod and Ben Ronaldson. Unfortunately, even with Wise living in England, they could never break through and win the qualifying slot.

Meanwhile across the Atlantic, a couple of players were reentering the fold after hiatuses. Bob Maher was competing at Worlds after a six-month layoff, and Dave Williams was going to use the Team Pro Tour as his point of return following a year-long absence. The two of them had their sights set on teaming with recent breakout Neil Reeves, but Maher and Williams couldn't provide enough points to qualify the team.

Wise, Maher, and Reeves told each other their sob stories at Worlds, and the connection was made. The three of them played in a team side event in Sydney and ran the table, setting up the creation of a fantastic pro team.

Courtney's Boys (named after Maher's wife, who put up with the trio during the weeks leading up to Pro Tour–Boston) was immediately viewed as a contender to win the whole event. They had Wise, who had won this event before. They had Maher, a Pro Tour and Grand Prix champion as well as former Player of the Year. And they had Reeves, who many consider the best Limited player in America.

Once the event began, anyone that dared to doubt this team's competence was silenced. At the end of Day 1, Courtney's Boys was the only team to emerge without a scratch, going 6-0 in the unpredictable Team Sealed format, beating teams such as Sigurd Eskeland's Plan 9 from Outland and the perennial high-finishing Stalking Tiger, Hidden Gibbon.

The Draft day didn't go as perfectly for the Boys. Round 7 saw them lose in three to eventual semifinalists Slay, Pillage, Gerard, and in Round 10 they drew with eventual finalists 2020. But perfection wasn't necessary; the trio won in Round 8 against French powerhouse Hobby One, in Round 9 against Stalking Tiger, Hidden Gibbon, and in a winner-takes-all final round pairing against www.star-maker.nl/lap (Jelger Wiegersma, Victor van den Broek and Frank Karsten).

Courtney's Boys: Gary Wise, Neil Reeves. Bob Maher

Courtney's Boys's draft strategy was straightforward for this event: put black on the right, green-blue in the middle, and hopefully white-red on the left. However, they had the ability to adapt, sometimes putting Wise into red-green to avoid getting caught in the traps of other experienced teams.

Their expertise earned them the top seed going into Sunday's single elimination portion. Their semifinal opponents were Canada's 2020 (Elijah Pollock, David Rood, and Steve Wolfman). Courtney's Boys's combined years of Pro Tour experience made it the favorite in the matchup. Many spectators were looking forward to the Boys battling Kai Budde's Phoenix Foundation in the finals before the first pack was opened on Sunday. But it wasn't to be.

Even though Courtney's Boys had positioned themselves to have the color advantages in all their matchups—Maher's blue-white against Pollock's green-red, Wise's red-green against Wolfman's black-white, and Reeves's black-blue against Rood's blue-white—it was 2020 that reaped the rewards of generous packs. Glory, Filth, Phantom Nishoba, and Grizzly Fate were just a few of the amazing picks the Canadian team received in the last go-around, and they were enough to tilt the tables back in their favor. Wolfman smashed Wise, and Rood dispatched Reeves almost as quickly. And just like that, Courtney's Boys's run was over.

But it was certainly a good run. Wise becomes the first player to make Day 3 as part of two different teams, Maher got a jump-start on what he hopes will be another Player of the Year award, and Reeves adds to his budding legacy. Will the Boys be back next year? Hard to say, as teams come and go like the tides, but if they do come back for another run, expect to see them on Sunday again.

Pro Tour–Boston Fourth Place

Slay, Pillage, Gerard

by Josh Bennett

Hard work pays off. It's easy to forget that when many pros make winning look effortless. They show up, demolish the competition, collect their checks, and go home, without a hint of the weeks of preparation that go into that kind of performance. While this is a disservice to most, it couldn't be more false about Slay, Pillage, Gerard.

Last year, they were Slay, Pillage, Massacre, with Scott McCord and Jon Sonne teaming up with Eric Ziegler. Completely under the radar, they quietly dismantled the opposition on their way to a sixth place finish. They playtested the format endlessly, and while flashier teams were in the Feature Match Area, Slay-Pillage-Massacre was at the ordinary tables using strategies derived from countless playtest sessions to incredible effect.

People noticed. Big things were expected when teams season rolled around again. But then, disaster! Ziegler came to his teammates early in the season and told them that he wouldn't have time to do the preparation they wanted. Enter Gerard Fabiano, last year's hotshot rookie who had finally earned the finishes to validate his growing reputation. He seemed a perfect fit.

The one problem was that he had already committed to teaming with Antonio DeRosa and Italy's Andrea Santin after his original team fell through. He wasn't about to put Santin and DeRosa in the same position, but they insisted that he do what was best for him. Said Fabiano, "They really showed me what good friends they are, and I just want to thank them for it."

McCord and Sonne were pleased. While they had a lot of high-talent offers coming in, they knew that Fabiano would contribute strongly to their playtesting. They returned to the techniques that brought them last year's success. They ran the Pro Tour Qualifier circuit to familiarize themselves with Team Sealed. They worked with the best minds from TOGIT and CMU. They ran countless practice drafts. It was no surprise to see them in the Top 4.

They're an interesting group, with Fabiano's animation contrasted with Sonne's stoic resolve. McCord usually displays a knowing smile, but oscillates between his teammates' extremes. Known quantities on the Tour, all enjoy the comforts of the gravy train. Asked if it's tough balancing a job with the drive to do well on the Tour, McCord deadpanned, "Yes."

As a team, they're more of a unit than most. They knew the decks they wanted to draft, and each took the one he worked best with. Because each knew the cards he needed, they could focus their energies on what the opposition was doing. While they would call Sonne one of the best technical players around (a fact Sonne would mutely deny), they didn't believe in having roles within the team. All contributed to their success any way they could.

When asked what their expectations were going into the tournament, they paused before answering, as if trying to figure out what that question meant. Of course they were looking for a win! They expected no less than Top 4. This wasn't overconfidence, or arrogance, but certainty. They knew their preparation had put them ahead of the field.

One place where they diverged from a lot of teams was in their practice of Team Sealed. Other teams complain about how matchups matter more than deck construction. Not so for Slay, Pillage, Gerard. They found the best combinations, and learned the cards that worked against their hard matchups. This would be the hallmark of their success.

For Draft, they had a plan and stuck to it. Black would go to Sonne in seat A, paired with whatever best matched his opponent—usually green to trump the default black-red strategy. Fabiano, in the middle, would take blue-green, and McCord, on the end, would draft aggro red-white. When asked about more adaptive strategies, McCord could barely conceal a laugh, "They just aren't as good." Fabiano had a longer explanation. "On the surface, it looks like you're just giving up a few picks to get an advantageous matchup. But you can't take a card that's good for you and ship the nuts, so a shift will usually cost four or five picks. Four or five cards can define a matchup."

McCord also stressed the value of testing outside of a particular region. Within a certain area, players tend to have the same valuations of cards. Moving outside that opens your mind to more possibilities. Fabiano echoed this, citing the testing they did with Eugene Harvey and Osyp Lebedowicz as a huge help.

They're already looking forward to next year, and a chance for revenge on Phoenix Foundation. Only this time around, people will know to watch out for them.

Slay, Pillage, Gerard: Jon Sonne, Gerard Fabiano, Scott McCord

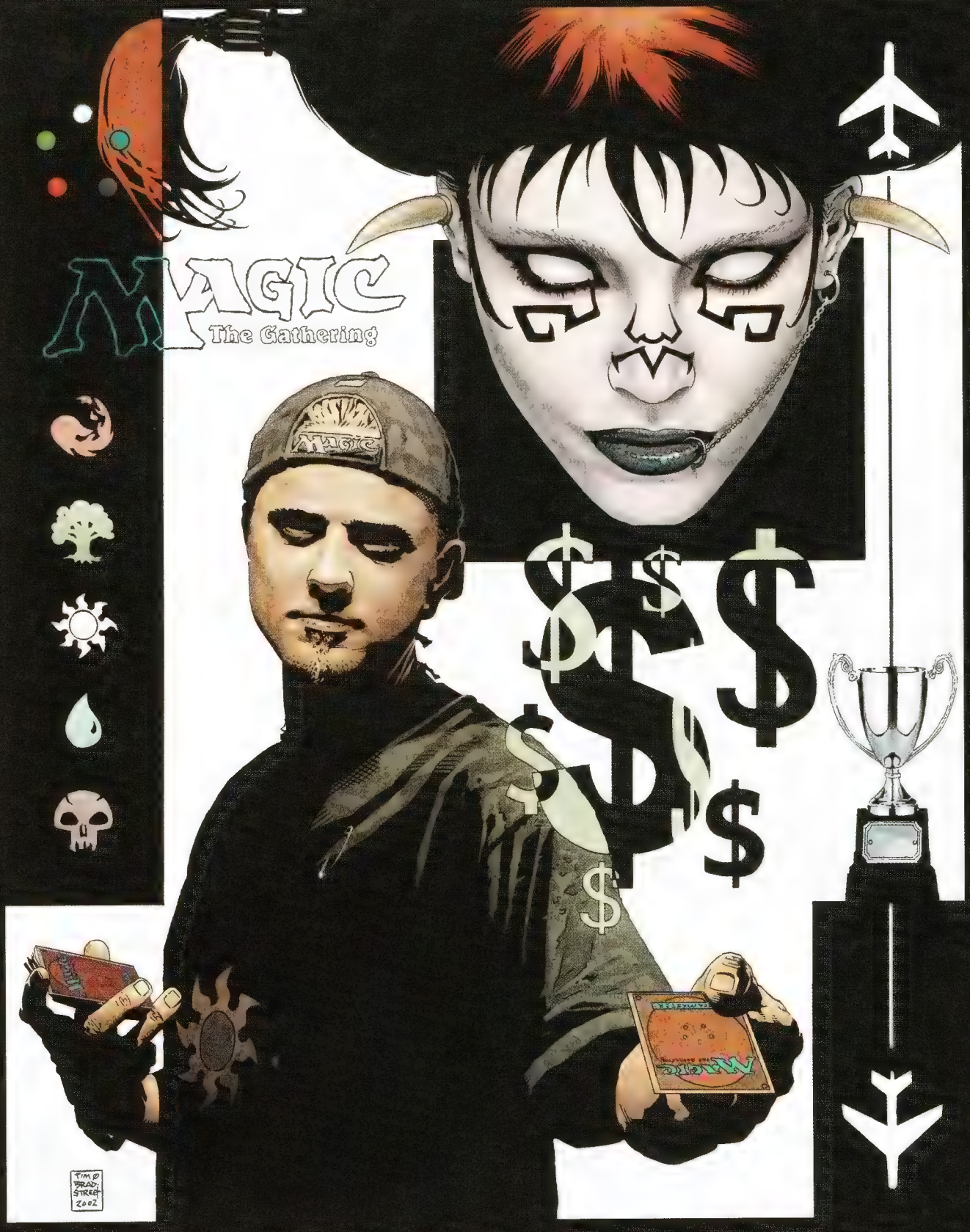
Boston Final Standings

Rank	Team	Prize	Pro Points
1	Phoenix Foundation	$60,000	24
2	[illegible]	[illegible]	18
3	Courtney's Boys	$18,000	12
4	Slay, Pillage, Gerard	[illegible]	12
5	www.star-maker.nl/lap	$12,600	8
6	Hobby One	[illegible]	8
7	2614WB93	$8,700	5
8	[illegible]	[illegible]	5
9	Togic	$6,000	4
10	De Eendjes	[illegible]	4
11	Team Outland 2002	$4,200	3
12	Attack Time	[illegible]	3
13	Outta Left Field	$3,300	3
14	[illegible]	[illegible]	3
15	[illegible]	$2,700	3
16	Plan 9 From Outland	[illegible]	6
17	www.mtgplanet.com	$2,100	2
18	Potato Foundation	[illegible]	4
19	RIW Hobbies	$1,500	2
20	[illegible]	$1,200	4
21	Illuminati		4
22	Team One Point - Magicville		4
23	Goldmember		4
24	LNT Anthology		4
25	Green Monsters II		3
26	Hato Beam		3
27	The Flaming Gambit		3
28	Absolute Samuels		3
29	Cream Foundation		3
30	Team Guam		3
31	Lnt Chovchen		3
32	TBS Affiliates		3
33	Superstars		2
34	Monster Rod		2
35	Pro Job		2
36	Burn Your Own Dog		2
37	Super Smash Bros		2
38	Your Enemy		2
39	Evil Inc		2
40	Fellowship of the Ting		2
41	Lasse er en abe		2
42	CardShark		2
43	Raw Dogs		2
44	Cause 4 Concern		2
45	To The Bar		2
46	604		2
47	Galactus Team		2
48	The TPS Report		2
49	Berlin Magic Foundation		2
50	Axis		2
51	D.D. Hama		2
52	Two Ch Bears And A D Mouse		2
53	Sol Malka Fan Club		2
54	Inquisition Mark		2
55	Bandana		2
56	Tired Lost Souls		2
57	Lovin' Spoonful		2
58	Token European		2
59	Rumledunk		2
60	Intl (Fungusaur) Conspiracy		2
61	Ziegler		2
62	The Rock and his DragonCon		2
63	Team Bjorksele		2
64	Turbo Petravark!		2
65	Sports Bench		2
66	Panzer Hunter		2
67	Road To Bearscape		2
68	Hoodwink		2
69	Scarecrow		2
70	The Janitor All Stars		2
71	JBL		2
72	Taller Smaller and Mauler		2
73	Nicht pennen		2
74	TOGIT Connection		2
75	strategyproducts.com		2
76	Illuminaughty		2
77	N.G.O.K.		2
78	Righteous Babe		2
79	Swedish Meatballs		2
80	Heffern & the Cutco Allstars		2
81	[illegible]		2
82	Angstschreeuw		2
83	Claimed off Waivers		2
84	Your Move Games		2
85	The Ancient Kavus		2
86	Huey Brock and Linde		2
87	Turbo Petradon		2
88	No Yaburon		2
89	CCGHouse.com		2
90	Team Tank Top		2
91	Damokles		2
92	Hood Rich		2
93	Los Miserables		2
94	Team Trinity		2
95	Cyanide		2
96	The Jokas		2
97	Robber Fly Terror Corps		2
98	Team Hikiniku		2
99	Eurotrash		2
100	Inferior Human-Ctrld Slimes		2
101	Team Rat Cave		2
102	Wood		2
103	SpielRaum.co.at		2
104	Domestic Affairs		2
105	B. Symposium		2
106	Unchain		2
107	Nameless Race		2
108	www.grimmoire.com		2
109	Latins Strike Back		2
110	Axis & Allies		2
111	S.S.D.		2
112	Caçadores da Xavaska Perdida		2
113	Two Kyle's and a Romanian		2
114	Games Den Team		2
115	The Castle		2
116	A Century of Mediocrity		2
117	Deadguy		2
118	On the stack?? What's that??		2
119	Unemployed		2
120	A to Z Comics		2
121	www.cartamagica.com		2

Tournament Manager	Head Judge	Floorjudge	Judge Certification
Jeff Donais (3)	Nat Fairbanks (4)	Adrian Teh (3)	Toby Elliot (3)

Judges

Collin Jackson (4)	David Lavergne (2)
Akio Sugaya (3)	François Laroche (2)
David Vogin (3)	Glenn Cannon (2)
James Lee (3)	Ian Taylor (2)
John Carter (3)	Jeremy Smith (2)
Ben Drago (2)	Mike Goodman (2)
Brent George (2)	Misha Zagorski (2)
Bruno Barracosa (2)	Scott Elliot (2)
Chris Wong (2)	Suzy Life (2)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Jens Thorén Wins Invitational

"Forestfolk" to Appear in "Bacon"

by Josh Bennett

The **Magic** Invitational is the game's most prestigious event—sixteen of the best in an all-out round-robin tournament with nothing on the line but glory. The winner doesn't walk away with an oversized novelty check, oh no. Instead, the winners are handed a bit of immortality: cards of their design, and sporting their likenesses, placed in upcoming expansions. Top Pro Tour finishes may fade from memory, but Invitational champions are forever a part of the game.

Another big incentive to attend is the location. In previous years, the Invitational had been held in such far-off places as Malaysia, South Africa, and Australia—and that's all expenses paid. Not a bad racket. This time around things were a little different. Having visited all the non-glacial continents, there was nowhere for the Invitational to go but cyberspace. The release of ***Magic*** *Online* was the perfect opportunity to bring the Invitational to a wider audience. All the matches would be played online and be available for playback through the free ***Magic*** *Online* client. All the action would take place at the Wizards offices outside Seattle.

This was not greeted with enthusiasm by the players. First of all, Seattle is about as far from exotic as you can get without going underground. While the games and weekend of fun would still be there, the stigma of traveling halfway around the world to sit at a computer only served to deepen existing frowns. It also meant an absence of wacky, Rosewater-designed cards. Not to mention the threat of mistakes being transcribed for all eternity and dissected by countless viewers.

From the viewer's side, it was nothing but gold. Reading match coverage is good for a story and a little strategy, but nothing compares to the ability to (figuratively) sit beside pros as they go through their games. The players would also be available for chats in between rounds, and the Gunslinging booths would be open on Sunday. ***Magic*** *Online* techies had been working round the clock to make sure their servers could handle the expected demand.

As always, it was to be a star-studded affair. From Latin America came World Champion Carlos Romão and his Top 4 partner-in-crime Diego Ostrovich. From Scandinavia came wild man and Pro Tour Champion Eivind Nitter as well as Jens Thorén and Tomi Walamies, two of the minds from Team Punisher. From France, the always goofy Gabriel Nassif and Olivier Ruel. Taking the long flight from Japan would be mastermind Itaru Ishida. Gary Wise would be representing planet Earth, having been booted from England a few weeks earlier. That left the seven Americans: metagame destroyer Brian Kibler, Everyone's Favorite Deadguys Chris Pikula and Dave Price, Your Move Games titans Dave Humpherys and Alex Shvartsman, the irrepressible Brian Davis, and last but certainly not least, returning Invitational champion and household name, Jon Finkel.

So where was the Player of the Year, Kai Budde? School concerns kept The German Juggernaut from showing up and spoiling everyone else's fun. Likewise, Zvi Mowshowitz was already under demands from his new job and had to turn down his invitation. That bumped Walamies and perennial invitee Pikula up from fifth and sixth in the fan ballot. They were all too happy to step into the vacant slots. It gave Pikula the record six Invitational appearances.

From the start, the players were talking about "USA versus The World." Pikula was frank about pinning the hopes of the red, white, and blue on Humpherys's capable shoulders. With Europe

When Forestfolk comes into play, you may search your library for a basic land card and put that card into play tapped. Then shuffle your library.
When Forestfolk leaves play, draw a card.

Jens Thorén

Tomi Walamies

Whenever Dying Shadowmage deals combat damage to a player, draw a card and put a glory counter on Dying Shadowmage. If it has three or more glory counters on it, sacrifice it.
: Dying Shadowmage gains flying until end of turn.

Jon Finkel

Gary Wise

Jens Thorén

- Nov. 2002 Online Extended -

4	Birds of Paradise
4	Braids, Cabal Minion
4	Llanowar Elves
3	Spiritmonger
3	Beast Attack
4	Call of the Herd
4	Duress
2	Pernicious Deed
3	Phyrexian Arena
3	Smother
3	Squirrel Nest
10	Forest
4	Llanowar Wastes
9	Swamp

sideboard

3	Chainer's Edict
3	Mesmeric Fiend
2	Pernicious Deed
3	Phantom Centaur
1	Phyrexian Arena
3	Slay

MAGIC The Gathering® INVITATIONAL

claiming more and more Pro Tour Top 8 spots, and the Latin Americans turning out in force at Worlds, the onus was on America to prove its game. And you could always count on Humpherys to test.

All but Walamies arrived late Wednesday night. Thursday was set aside for fun. In past years, this meant crazy excursions into the nearby countryside. This time, they would have something even better: the opportunity to run wild at the Wizards of the Coast offices. The festivities were given a merciful 10:00 A.M. start time, and the competitors took full advantage. The breakfast room at the Spring Hill Suites was a little busier than usual. What few suits dared step into the breach quickly scurried away from the buffet with their muffins and coffee. It was late enough in the morning that the Invitationalists were their usual animated selves. Free food and appropriate company only fueled their fire. Gamers in full effect are not something the average human can stomach. Any more taken aback, and they would have been all British accents and "Well, I never!"

Soon enough, the players were herded by Mark Rosewater into the heavy morning gray. The first item on the agenda was orientation. The players were shown the rooms where they'd be competing. There were two so that opponents would be split up, meaning that yes, even the trash talk would be available for public consumption. After a quick tutorial and a rundown of the weekend's itinerary, the players were given some free time to play against one another. Well, you don't have to tell a gamer twice. For all their griping about having to play **Magic** on computers, they took to it ferociously. Since no one had a deck handy, they mostly threw down with the Auction of the People decks and *Onslaught* Sealed Decks. An hour later, and they were no less enthusiastic. They practically had to be dragged away.

Once disengaged from their terminals the players were ready for the day's marquee moment: the tour of Wizards of the Coast. It was like a real-life Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Gary Wise made a fine Augustus Gloop, proving unable to restrain himself when faced with the wonders of Research & Development. He practically had to be held back lest he break past the barricade, stuff his pants with top-secret documents, and run laughing into the Renton countryside. Eivind Nitter and Olivier Ruel tried a sneakier method, using a slow walking pace to get conveniently "lost" along the way. Their thrilling adventures were cut short five minutes later.

Not that there wasn't lots to do and see on the planned route. Everywhere you looked there were games, gamers, and game paraphernalia. It looked more like an oversized rumpus room than a place of business. Eventually the members of the tour group found their way to people at work. Any chance of productivity was sabotaged as the players sprawled in and around cubes, eager hands picking up anything that wasn't bolted down. They were quickly distracted with candy and steered away. There were many jokes as they visited the gym, prompted by the on-duty attendant who seemed surprised to have visitors. Things wrapped up with a stroll through the gardens.

From there it was off to beautiful downtown Seattle, where the Invitationalists were loosed on an unsuspecting populace. They broke into small groups and wandered, somewhat aimlessly, for a few hours. Most lamented that they weren't able to use that time to prepare their decks for the Constructed formats. The day closed with dinner at a hoity-toity restaurant, where the staff had to contend with what was by that point a highly spirited group. When Tomi Walamies finally turned up, the cheer that went up silenced the rest of the diners. Of course, things couldn't end with everyone being well rested for the competition the next day. Those who didn't go out and sample the nightlife couldn't help but draft until the wee hours.

The early start time had a lot of players looking bleary-eyed as they sat down to their computers on Friday. However, the first format did everything to lift their spirits: Two-Headed Giant. Granted, this was probably the most-derided format going into the event. Certainly no one tested it. The rules were straightforward: two teams share 40 life, and the first team brought to 0 loses. Spells and effects could target freely, but each player could only attack the person directly across from him. Of course, you could still sabotage your team if you really wanted to. Chris Pikula openly lamented the fact that there was no one in attendance he hated enough to drag down into a loss.

Halfway through the first round, all the players were enjoying themselves. The big factor was the teaming-up of roommates. Romão and Ostrovich got rowdy. The Deadguys dissected their opponents with trash talk. Davis and Ishida strategized like fiends. Nassif and Ruel went full-on silly, but even they were outclassed by Wise and Nitter, who were all shouts and high-fives. Even Shvartsman and Humpherys, stoic in Your Move Games red and black, couldn't help but lighten up. Thorén and Walamies kept a low profile, but you could tell they were up to something. The emphasis on good times was made clear when everything stopped as Olivier Ruel tapped eight to turn over Krosan Colossus. He proceeded to take a victory lap, slapping hands with all the competitors in his room. Things only intensified when the pods of

Brian Kibler

Flying
As Glorious Dragon-Kin comes into play, choose a color. Creatures you control have protection from the chosen color.

Carlos Romão

Dave Humpherys

Eivind Nitter

Final Standings

1	Jens Thorén	10-5
2	Tomi Walamies	10-5
3	Jon Finkel	10-5
4	Gary Wise	9-6
5	Brian Kibler	9-6
6	Carlos Romão	8-7
7	Dave Humpherys	8-7
8	Eivind Nitter	8-7
9	Gabriel Nassif	8-7
10	Brian Davis	7-8
11	Olivier Ruel	7-8
12	Alex Shvartsman	6-9
13	Itaru Ishida	6-9
14	Dave Price	6-9
15	Diego Ostrovich	4-11
16	Chris Pikula	4-11

four rotated pairings, pitting roommate against roommate. It was shocking to see the stars of the game show their multiplayer colors. They couldn't help themselves. They ooh'd and ahh'd over Insurrection and Blatant Thievery. They ran maximum Syphon Minds. They went so far as to declare Righteous Cause broken.

Emerging from the three rounds as the sole undefeated player was Alex Shvartsman, with his final pool being an exercise in absurdity. He had not only Exalted Angel and Quicksilver Dragon, but also Riptide Shapeshifter to go get them! On the flip side were Nassif, Ostrovich, and Pikula, who couldn't manage a single win.

Next up was *Online* Extended, a format unique to the world of ***Magic*** *Online*. With the rotation of *Invasion* block from Standard Constructed, it just made sense to create a wider Constructed format that included all the cards that appear online. Much more like Standard than "real life" Extended, it had many competitors leaning towards safe bets. Four players defaulted to blue-green madness, a deck whose power was well demonstrated. Tellingly, the only *Onslaught* card to make an appearance was Naturalize in the sideboard. Brian Davis took its ridiculous consistency to 3-0, though Dave Price's very similar design got him nothing. Also staying the course were Romão and Ostrovich, who tweaked their "Cunning-Tog" decks from Worlds with Smother and who each managed 2-1 records.

Wise and Nitter took advantage of the *Onslaught* fetch lands to add white to blue-green threshold decks and were rewarded with a combined 5-1—Nitter earned the gold star. The Punishers also went 5-1 with their black-green aggro-control deck that harnessed the power of Spiritmonger and Pernicious Deed. Thorén's perfect record put him ahead of Walamies.

Joining Dave Price in winlessness were Finkel and Ruel, both running Battle of Wits. A combined 0-6 did a lot to write off their deck. The fruits of 1-2 mediocrity fell to Kibler's take on red-green aggro, as well as Ishida and Nassif's wacky four-color control decks. Shvartsman, Nitter, and Thorén led the standings as the day drew to a close.

So far, so good. There were a few interface screwups (notably a 5-0 Fact or Fiction split by Gary Wise against Itaru Ishida), but it was mostly just **Magic**. The fans were insatiable. Packed into the rooms waiting for matches to finish, they filled the chat window with an endless stream of "Go Carlos!" and "Finkel is still the best!" If the pros had any illusions that no one looked up to them, they were shattered by the overwhelming support.

Gabriel Nassif

- November 2002 Standard -

4	Birds of Paradise
4	Braids, Cabal Minion
4	Llanowar Elves
4	Merfolk Looter
4	Shadowmage Infiltrator
4	Call of the Herd
4	Memory Lapse
4	Opposition
4	Smother
4	City of Brass
4	Darkwater Catacombs
7	Forest
1	Island
3	Polluted Delta
1	Swamp
4	Underground River

sideboard

3	Dark Banishing
3	Duress
3	Naturalize
2	Oversold Cemetery
4	Ravenous Baloth

The morning of Day 2 dawned, and the players were a little more eager. Things kicked off with the Auction of the People, now a fixture of the Invitational. Players would take turns bidding down their starting hand sizes and life totals to determine who would play which decks. This time around, designers were forced to work with a single letter that had to head up a word in every card name in the deck except basic land. The "O" deck was the standout, featuring not only Opposition and Static Orb, but also Fact "or" Fiction and Call "of" the Herd. The players did the actual auctioning live in front of the ***Magic*** *Online* audience, and hammed it up for their benefit. Plenty of chatter made it really fun to watch.

The way things broke down, there were only two aberrant results, suggesting that players had a good idea of how to value the decks. Those choosing in the second half of the auction did slightly better, but the 1-2's mixed with the 2-1's almost uniformly. Alex Shvartsman was happy to get the "Q" deck at 6 cards and 13 life, but couldn't win a match with it, lopping himself off the top of the standings. He even outdid Ruel's outrageous 4 card-20 life bid on "O". Meanwhile, Nassif gunned for the red beatdown "R" deck at 6 cards and 9 life and 3-0'd, even without his trademark lucky yellow hat. After his 0-3 debacle with Battle of Wits the day before, Finkel was determined to play Battle in all formats. He registered a Battle deck for Sunday's Standard event, and bought the "B" deck at 7 cards and 13 life. He surprised everyone by going 2-1.

Finally, the players found themselves in a format they were prepared for: Rochester Draft. *Onslaught* was still a new set, but the players had played it enough to have a good idea of what was going on. Only two players went undefeated: Wise and Finkel. From their drafts, there was no mystery surrounding why. Wise recognized that the players in front of him were rejecting blue (*Onslaught*'s weakest color), and he went for it. The dividends included a fifth pick Future Sight! Finkel also managed to maneuver into choice real estate, being the only red drafter in four seats despite it being thought the best of *Onslaught*'s colors. In fact, it wasn't just the bleached hair that made him look like the Finkel of old. As he won his last match, it

Discard a card from your hand.
Search your library for a card that shares a type with the discarded card, reveal that card, and put it into your hand. Then shuffle your library. (The card types are artifact, creature, enchantment, instant, land, and sorcery.)
"Woof."

Gabriel Nassif

Brian Davis

Olivier Ruel

1: Mage Hunter gains an ability of your choice that target creature has. (This effect doesn't end at end of turn.)
1: Destroy target Wizard.

Alex Shvartsman

dawned on him that he was in the running to make the finals. Then he remembered his choice to run the Battle, and shouted, "I can't believe I have to play that horrible deck tomorrow!"

At the end of the day, there was a four-way tie for first place, with three more close behind. But the intensification of the race contrasted with the ease of the competitors. Everyone was having a ball. Even the usually reticent Ishida was laughing and joking along with the rest of the crew. He, Ruel, and Ostrovich commiserated over their 4-8 standings. Pikula may have grumbled about his 2-10 standing, but he was at his sarcastic best. The Hump had to endure some good-natured ribbing about his pace of play slowing down the event, but he had some choice words of his own.

The last three rounds were Standard with *Onslaught,* and they came with a welcome surprise: blue-green was not the dominant force everyone expected. Instead, forward-thinking designs like the Mirari's Wake decks played by Kibler and Thorén, Nassif's crazy three-color Opposition, and Walamies's "Neo Punisher" flourished. Wise and Nitter tried to run their *Online* Extended decks, but got 1-5'd out of the race. Ruel 3-0'd with updated blue-green Opposition, and Jonny **Magic** got the 3-0 he needed with Battle, only to finish third because of tiebreakers. The finalists were teammates and roommates: Jens Thorén and Tomi Walamies.

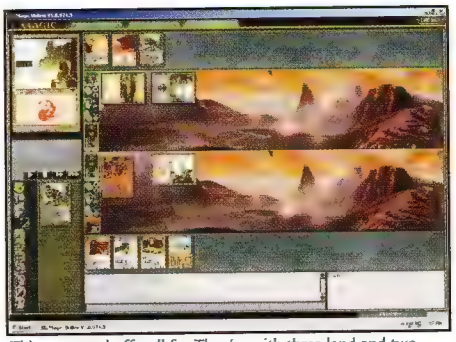
While the finals started to shake down, the rest of the Invitationalists manned their Gunslinging stations. The response was insane. Hundreds of players waited for a chance to cross swords with the World Champion or the man behind Week in Review. Kibler gave the fans what they wanted, and started attacking for hundreds with his Wake deck. At one point, he reached the ***Magic*** *Online* upper bound for tokens in play. The King of Beatdown took his trusty Goblins into the fray. As much as the fans wanted to play, the pros wanted to give them the opportunity. They even pushed back dinner to get a few extra bouts in.

The first match of the finals was in *Online* Extended. Thorén took the first and looked to be on the losing end of the second, but some cagey play allowed him to Deed away blockers and come through for just enough that Walamies's Phyrexian Arena would kill him. The Silent Assassin may have giggled when he saw the line of play.

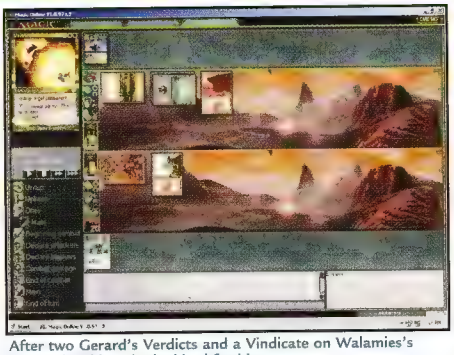
The tables were turned in their next match, which saw Thorén's Wake face Walamies's Neo-Punisher. An update of his Worlds deck, it draws extra power from Opposition. The added disruption made all the difference as Walamies took two straight, forcing the final match.

It was "G" versus "V". Walamies had the red-white "G" beatdown deck, opposite Thorén's three-color Visara the Dreadful, Void, and Vindicate deck. Starting with five cards seemed like a huge disadvantage, but Thorén was not to be stopped. He drew the right colors—like the pro he is—and a replacement Visara when he threw one away in game two. When the win was his, the always-expressionless Thorén broke into a full grin. It was the perfect expression of the weekend: the game's best playing purely for the love of the game.

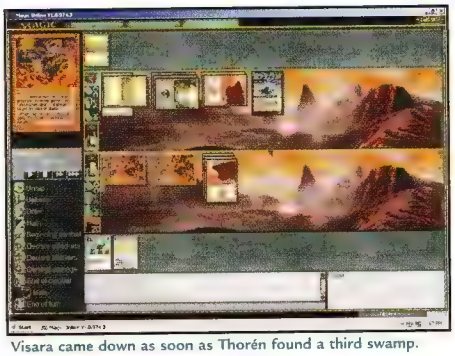
THE FINAL GAME
Auction of the People: Jens Thoren vs. Tomi Walamies



Things started off well for Thorén, with three land and two Gerard's Verdicts.



After two Gerard's Verdicts and a Vindicate on Walamies's Mountain, things looked bad for him.



Visara came down as soon as Thorén found a third swamp.

Walamies tried to force damage through with his Grim Lavamancers before Visara cleaned things up, but he came up 5 damage short.

Walamies used Gustcloak Harrier and Goblin Legionnaire to kill Visara.

Thorén finds another Visara, dispatching Walamies before he can draw another Goblin Legionnaire for the kill.

Trample
At the beginning of your upkeep, you may sacrifice a creature. If you do, put a +1/+1 counter on Gentle Gourmet
, Discard a card from your hand: Target opponent reveals his or her hand. Choose a noncreature, nonland card from it. That player discards that card.
2/9

Itaru Ishida

Dave Price

Diego Ostrovich

, Remove the top card of your library from the game. Until end of turn, if that card is a Goblin, sorcery, or mountain card, you may play it as though it were in your hand (Reveal the card as you remove it from the game.)

Chris Pikula

London

by Craig Jones

The decision to have Grand Prix–London coincide with the British **Gen Con** turned out to be a good one, as a monstrous 683 players turned out to play, making this the largest tournament ever in England and the third largest Grand Prix in Europe. Like last year, the tournament was held at the Kensington Olympia, a short tube ride from the center of London. For those not making the cut to Day 2, **Gen Con** would provide plenty of entertainment.

Indications of how popular the tournament would be came the day before, when a massive 280 players decided to give their decks a final tweak in the Pro Tour Qualifier on Friday. Morgan Karlsson took the single slot in a Top 8 that included no one from the host nation.

British success on the Grand Prix circuit has been sparse. You would need to look way back to 1998 to find the only Englishman to have claimed a title. Then, as now, the tournament was held on home soil; that has always seemed to provide the best opportunity for British hopes, whether they lay in the hands of established players such as John Ormerod, Ben Ronaldson, and a newly repatriated Gary Wise, or any of a new crop of solid young players looking to make a mark. It would not be easy for the British, though, as there was a host of players standing in their way, including solid players from the continent and a handful of big names from the U.S., including Bob Maher Jr., looking to blaze the comeback trail.

The format was *Odyssey* Block Constructed, which has been much maligned by many players as stagnant and without variety in deck archetypes. At Pro Tour–Osaka earlier in the year, monoblack control and some version of green-blue beatdown seemed to be the only decks worth playing, and not much had changed since. For a tournament so late in the season, it was surprising that a few players decided to opt for different strategies. Jonny Chapman had scythed through a large field of blue-green in one of the earlier trials with a monoblack Braids, Cabal Minion beatdown deck he dubbed "Pirates", and a few of the English players followed his lead for the main event. Another deck much touted by the better UK players was a complicated combo deck based around Mirari's Wake, Cunning Wish, and Mirari itself. Much more ominous was to see the sudden rise in popularity of black-blue Upheaval builds amongst some of the top pros like Olivier Ruel and the Juggernaut himself, Kai Budde.

Despite this, monoblack control still proved itself king—by the end of a hard fought Day 1, three monoblack decks were sitting unbeaten at the top of the standings. The fourth undefeated deck was a black blue Braids deck piloted by Gérard Garcia. Of those four, Garcia, Pedro Velhinho, and Christoph Hölzl would go onto to make Top 8, while Dutchman Jelger Wiegersma would fall just short.

Gary Wise has recently made a habit of making late charges up the standings with monoblack, but this time he faltered in the last few rounds, and the host nation's sole hopes fell onto the unlikely shoulders of Craig Stevenson. With no byes, the previously unknown plucky Englishman had picked up a copy of the Pirates deck and played straight knockout into the Top 8.

It turned out to be a very cosmopolitan Top 8, with seven different nationalities represented. There were a few familiar faces, some new ones, and one blast from the past. Joining Stevenson, Garcia (France), and Velhinho (Portugal) were Bram Snepvangers (Netherlands), Christophe Haim (France), Dario Minieri (Italy), and former World Champion Jakub Slemr (Czech Republic).

Last year, it was Kai Budde who stamped his mark on Grand Prix–London. This year it was another German, Christoph Hölzl. After finishing Day 1 undefeated, Hölzl continued Day 2 in exactly the same fashion as he pounded all opposition en-route to a perfect 14-0 record. Would this be another story of German dominance?

It seemed that way, as Hölzl and his slightly unorthodox take on the monoblack control deck took down Garcia and then Snepvangers's white-blue deck. It wasn't to be, though, because this fairytale was all about a very familiar face from the past returning to the limelight. Jakub Slemr is a name that hasn't been heard much recently, but in the end the Czech player's sideboard of four Squirrel Nests and four Envelops proved to be too much, and Hölzl's fantastic run was finally ended.

Jakub Slemr

- Odyssey Block -

4	Basking Rootwalla
4	Nimble Mongoose
4	Werebear
4	Wild Mongrel
3	Wonder
4	Æther Burst
1	Breakthrough
4	Careful Study
4	Mental Note
3	Roar of the Wurm
3	Standstill
3	Centaur Garden
8	Forest
11	Island

sideboard

4	Envelop
1	Forest
2	Krosan Reclamation
2	Phantom Centaur
4	Squirrel Nest
2	Upheaval

Rank	Name	Prize	Pro Points
1	Jakub Slemr	$2,400	6
2	Christoph Hölzl	$1,700	5
3	Bram Snepvangers	$1,200	4
4	Craig Stevenson	$1,000	4
5	Pedro Velhinho	$800	3
6	Christophe Haim	$800	3
7	Dario Minieri	$800	3
8	Gérard Garcia	$800	3
9	Gary Wise	$500	2
10	Stephen Gemell	$500	2
11	Gabriel Nassif	$500	2
12	Nuno Costa	$500	2
13	Dario Parazzoli	$500	2
14	John Larkin	$500	2
15	Peter Gysemans	$500	2
16	Markus Josbac	$500	2
17	Bastien Perez	$250	1
18	Nuno Ribeiro	$250	1
19	Ricardo Duarte	$250	1
20	Stewart Shinkins	$250	1
21	Wilfried Ranque	$250	1
22	Olivier Ruel	$250	1
23	Michael Pustilnik	$250	1
24	Jean Charles Salvin	$250	1
25	Nicolas Labarre	$250	1
26	Nils Jeschke	$250	1
27	Rickard Österberg	$250	1
28	Teren Merle Des Isles	$250	1
29	Alexandre Braga	$250	1
30	Tomas Krejsa	$250	1
31	Robert Maher	$250	1
32	Peter Adams	$250	1
33	Timo Kempf		
34	Gyrid Odegaard		
35	Steve Easton		
36	Alessandr Luchetti		
37	Mats Clays		
38	Sam Gomersall		
39	Pierre Canali		
40	Nikolas Nygaard		
41	Florent Lefranc		
42	Jelger Wiegersma		
43	Stefan Pizzocchen		
44	Andreas Behrens		
45	Radoslaw Gromko		
46	Thibault Perthuis		
47	Tony Martins		
48	Jonny Chapman		
49	Steven Gouin		
50	Bas Knapen		
51	Stefan Fries		
52	Kristoffer Apollo		
53	Pawel Mazierski		
54	Carlos Costa		
55	Chi Hung Liu		
56	Wenzel Krautmann		
57	Ricardo Ramiao		
58	Robert Dougherty		
59	Alexis Dumay		
60	Thomas Bucourt		
61	Lionel Payen		
62	David Ball		
63	Markus Kolb		
64	Pierre Vandercamere		

Grand Prix Cleveland

by Josh Bennett

The *Odyssey* Block Constructed format was just starting to come into its own heading into Grand Prix–Cleveland. Worlds had shattered the preconception that there were only two decks in the format, serving up three different blue-green builds, monoblack, Punisher blue-white, and green-white madness. Grand Prix–London then debuted blue-black Upheaval and a monoblack aggro deck called "Pirates". With that world of possibilities in front of them, 607 eager competitors crashed Cleveland's I-X Center.

The field was the usual mish-mash, dominated by netdecked blue-green and monoblack. Looking a little closer, though, the field's diversity was apparent. Anything that had posted results was being piloted, along with a few brand spanking new designs. William "Baby Huey" Jensen had many pairs of eyes focused on his matches, as he played a black-red land destruction deck that abused Recoup, Burning Wish, and Mirari. It was a cagey move, since almost half the players with three byes were pinning their hopes on monoblack control.

There were eight rounds on Day 1, with only a tenth of the competitors passing on to the next day. The cutoff was 6-2, and 39 players with that record found themselves with the wrong kind of tiebreakers. Among them were such pros as Eric Froehlich, Matt Linde, and Eric Taylor. Rob Dougherty, Matt Rubin, and Bob Maher Jr. were more fortunate. It was star power all the way to the top, with Smilin' Brian Davis in the number one spot thanks to his 8-0 day with "Upheaval-Infestation". His prediction that it would be his ticket to a top finish was validated by Kenny Hsiung, who also went undefeated with a slightly different version of the deck. Sandwiched between them was amateur Matthew Schempp, playing green-white madness. His performance was particularly remarkable because he managed the sweep without the benefit of byes.

Valentin Moskovich

· Odyssey Block ·

4	Nantuko Shade
4	Chainer's Edict
4	Diabolic Tutor
1	Haunting Echoes
4	Innocent Blood
2	Mind Sludge
1	Mirari
4	Mutilate
2	Skeletal Scrying
4	Rancid Earth
4	Tainted Pact
4	Cabal Coffers
22	Swamp

sideboard

4	Braids, Cabal Minion
2	Cabal Therapy
3	Faceless Butcher
1	Haunting Echoes
4	Mesmeric Fiend
1	Screams of the Damned

Day 2 got underway far earlier than the players would have liked. Monoblack decks were out in force, represented by 24 players, but adding players of all the blue-green builds together only yielded fifteen more. The second half of the field was mostly splayed across four more decks, with a few one-of's. The six remaining rounds of Swiss distilled them to just eight.

There were the established pros, Canadian Gab Tsang, Rob Dougherty of Your Move Games, and the irrepressible Brian Davis. Tsang and Dougherty both went with Quiet Speculation but had drastically different takes on it. Then there was Jeremy Pinter and his green-white madness deck, hungry for a breakout performance. There were the three amateurs, Schempp, Adam Prosak playing still another version of Speculation, and Valentin Moskovich as the lone monoblack control player in the Top 8.

The eighth man in the quarterfinals was the one that drew the most attention: David Williams, at his first sanctioned event since the end of his DCI suspension. With just one bye thanks to his unfrozen rating and a fire to prove he still has what it takes, Williams took Pirates and clobbered the field, drawing with ease into the elimination rounds.

Watching from the sidelines were Hsiung and Eugene Harvey. Hsiung lost out to Dougherty on tiebreakers, and Harvey and his Mirari's Wake deck could only manage a draw against Davis, which was enough to put Davis in and keep Harvey out.

The quarterfinals were brutal. After Williams quickly defeated Schempp in game one, it all went downhill. Schempp's Phantom Centaurs decided to show up for games two and three, making short work of Williams. Next door, Moskovich mopped up Prosak in an awesome display of monoblack's potential for unfairness. Davis squared off against Pinter and failed to get past him. Tsang emerged victorious over Dougherty in the clash of the titans.

The semifinals were the end of the road for the green-white decks. Moskovich and Tsang steamrolled the opposition in four very quick games. The finals looked like a good matchup for Tsang, and it seemed like everyone was behind him. His opening was sluggish in the first game, though, giving Moskovich plenty of time to take control. A topdecked Wild Mongrel let him make two Roar of the Wurm tokens with Envelop up, but Moskovich had a pair of Mutilates for six. Tsang was not so easily defeated in the second game, however, and it was all down to game three. It was a farce. Tsang mulliganed, then kept a hand that degenerated into an ugly four spell, fifteen land draw. Moskovich stomped to victory. For his efforts, Moskovich scored $3,900, and all that without the benefit of byes. Not a bad weekend's work.

Rank	Name	Prize	Pro Points
1	Valentin Moskovich	$2,400	6
2	Gabriel Tsang	$1,700	5
3	Matthew Schempp	$1,200	4
4	Jeremy Pinter	$1,000	4
5	Adam Prosak	$800	3
6	David Williams	$800	3
7	Brian Davis	$800	3
8	Robert Dougherty	$800	3
9	Kenny Hsiung	$500	2
10	Eugene Harvey	$500	2
11	David Rood	$500	2
12	Michael Dove	$500	2
13	Matthew Navy	$500	2
14	Antonino De Rosa	$500	2
15	Gabe Walls	$500	2
16	Osyp Lebedowicz	$500	2
17	Brian Hegstad	$250	1
18	Paul Rietzl	$250	1
19	Matt Schmaltz	$250	1
20	Cedric Phillips	$250	1
21	Josh Shroll	$250	1
22	William Jensen	$250	1
23	Brandon Miller	$250	1
24	Gerard Fabiano	$250	1
25	Kiet Ngo	$250	1
26	Darwin Kastle	$250	1
27	John Honea	$250	1
28	Jonathan Morawski	$250	1
29	Brian Kibler	$250	1
30	Matthew Rubin	$250	1
31	Tim Sjoberg	$250	1
32	Shaun Doran	$250	1
33	Robert Maher		
34	Andrew Stokinger		
35	Tom Willoughby		
36	Ben Rubin		
37	Doug Tice		
38	Jin-Choon Ng		
39	Cale Halley		
40	Mike C. White		
41	Chris Chin		
42	Karl Horn		
43	David Irvine		
44	Ben Stark		
45	Michael Paski		
46	Dan Rodemann		
47	Christian Rochon		
48	Adam Whitehead		
49	Jacob Beal		
50	Peter Chen		
51	Andy Schmidt		
52	Christopher Gibbons		
53	Marty Porter		
54	James Mccarthy		
55	Michael Bernat		
56	Kenneth Hagen		
57	Greg Schwartz		
58	Chuck Bowman		
59	Rosco Schock		
60	Randy Wright		
61	Timothy Aten		
62	David Munk		
63	Jamey Wagner		
64	Justin Bing		

Grand Prix Hamburg

by Craig Jones

While the Juggernaut's away, the mice will play. When the Grand Prix circuit moved into Kai Budde's hometown of Hamburg, Germany, Kai was away in Boston crushing all opposition with his team, Phoenix Foundation, at the Pro Tour. While the date clash meant Hamburg would be short of most of the famous names that normally grace European Grand Prix events, it would also provide a fascinating opportunity for newer players to come out of the shadows of the Pro Tour giants and make their own mark.

That isn't to say nobody was there. Star of Grand Prix–London with his perfect 14-0 record in the Swiss, Christoph Hölzl was looking to continue his good form in Hamburg. Top Belgian players Jan Doise and Geoffrey Siron were also in attendance, although the biggest name had to belong to Mark Ziegner. Ziegner came out of nowhere to finish runner-up at a very tough German National Championship this past year and then continued his run by finishing runner-up at this year's Worlds as well as taking the team title along with Budde and Felix Schneiders. With a whole host of strong German players in attendance, it would have been foolish to think that this Grand Prix would be a pushover, especially considering that it was Germany that unseated the U.S. team in the last Team Championship.

Despite the clash with Pro Tour Boston, 582 players still showed up to the Curio-Haus in Hamburg's University district to battle for the title. Due to a healthy Grand Prix Trial season, a number of players also had three byes with which to challenge the few pros in attendance.

The tournament also marked the last hurrah for the *Odyssey* Block Constructed season. The format had been through a few ups and down since monoblack control and blue-green beatdown builds had it in a vice at Pro Tour–Osaka. *Judgment* brought a few new cards into the mix and some new deck types such as Mirari's Wake, green-white madness, and black-blue Upheaval were kicking around.

In London, monoblack control decks asserted dominance on Day 1, but here it was the turn of green to crash back into control. Three players—Nico Wendt of Germany, Lukas Egloff of Switzerland, and Jean Charles Salvin of France—saw out Day 1 with perfect records. Wendt and Egloff played blue-green decks based around Quiet Speculation, while Salvin paired green with white instead for cards like Anurid Brushhopper and Glory.

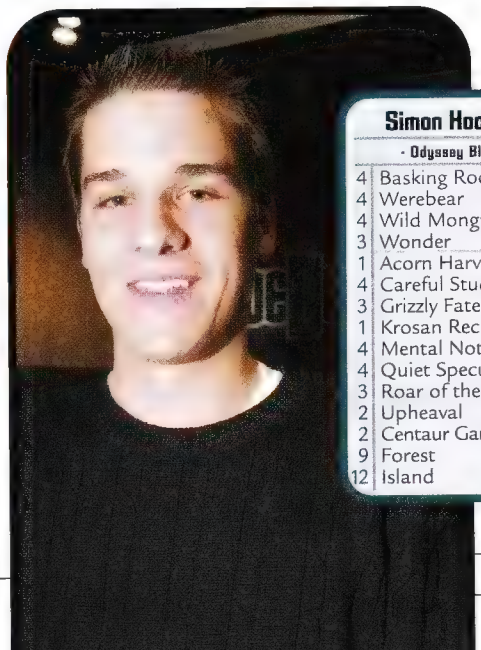
The green dominance continued, as once the dust had settled around Day 2, seven of the Top 8 decks had chosen to run Wild Mongrel. Four of those decks paired green with blue and abused Quiet Speculation to spawn fat 6/6 Wurm tokens and armies of Bears out of their graveyards. Green-white had also done surprisingly, well with Patrick Plößer and Arndt Meier joining Salvin in the Top 8 with decks based around the highly useful superfrog, Anurid Brusshopper, and the ever-abusive Glory. Piotr Sienko, from Poland, was playing the lone black deck to stand up to the stampede of green. Jean Charles Salvin was forced to drop from the quarterfinals in order to catch a flight, so Sienko was the last remaining hurdle to German triumph, as a staggering six of the Top 8 players were from the host nation.

As was expected, it was also a largely inexperienced Top 8. Jens Krause, Simon Hockwin, Meier, and Salvin had attended a Pro Tour each with limited success, while for the rest—Wendt, Sienko, Plößer, and Dennis Schmitz—this marked a high in their **Magic** careers.

In the Top 8, Sienko's stand against the might of the home nation came unstuck in the quarters. Despite a devastating turn in which the Pole played Mutilate and then Haunting Echoes to gut his opponent's library, he still couldn't prevent his opponent, Simon Hockwin, from following an Upheaval with a lone Mongrel for the win.

From there, the young German didn't look back as his deck churned out wave after wave of Bears (through Grizzly Fate) with which to maul his opponents. Plößer was swept aside in the semi's while Meier, the fortunate recipient of a bye because of Salvin's early departure, took down Krause in his semifinal match.

Meier provided more resistance in the final, taking game one as Upheaval proved of limited use versus "superfrog". In game two, Hockwin's sideboard tech of Aboshan, Cephalid Emperor emerged to wash out Meier's board, and then the match petered out into an anti-climax as Meier never recovered from mana problems in game three. The title of champion of Grand Prix–Hamburg went to Simon Hockwin and his armies of Bears.



Simon Hockwin

- Odyssey Block -

4	Basking Rootwalla
4	Werebear
4	Wild Mongrel
3	Wonder
1	Acorn Harvest
4	Careful Study
3	Grizzly Fate
1	Krosan Reclamation
4	Mental Note
4	Quiet Speculation
3	Roar of the Wurm
2	Upheaval
2	Centaur Garden
9	Forest
12	Island

sideboard

2	Aboshan, Cephalid Emperor
4	Envelop
3	Krosan Beast
1	Moment's Peace
3	Nantuko Blightcutter
2	Ray of Revelation

Rank	Name	Prize	Pro Points
1	Simon Hockwin	$2,400	6
2	Arndt Meier	$1,700	5
3	Jens Krause	$1,200	4
4	Patrick Plößer	$1,000	4
5	Nico Wendt	$800	3
6	Piotr Sienko	$800	3
7	Dennis Schmitz	$800	3
8	Jean Charles Salvin	$800	3
9	Daniel Barenhoff	$500	2
10	Daniel Rötger	$500	2
11	Peer Kröger	$500	2
12	Henning Fischer	$500	2
13	Janosch Kühn	$500	2
14	Rouven Korsetz	$500	2
15	Uli Hoenle	$500	2
16	Jan Doise	$500	2
17	Bas Knapen	$250	1
18	Johannes Hoelzl	$250	1
19	Sebastian Hebisch	$250	1
20	Georg Sheljasov	$250	1
21	Jan Tomcani	$250	1
22	Yann Blumer	$250	1
23	Rene Kraft	$250	1
24	Torben Twiehl	$250	1
25	Jaroslav Sita	$250	1
26	Sven Fischer	$250	1
27	Geoffrey Siron	$250	1
28	Marius Schaefer	$250	1
29	Marten Jensen	$250	1
30	Bodo Rösner	$250	1
31	Tom G Hay	$250	1
32	Lukas Egloff	$250	1
33	Michael Steinbach		
34	Michael Meilikhov		
35	Tobias Kroll		
36	Stefan Heumann		
37	Julien Zarka		
38	Kai Utz		
39	Matthias Spode		
40	André Delere		
41	Svante Landgraf		
42	Daniel Dietze		
43	Lars Birch		
44	Lukasz Gieron		
45	Benjamin Ribbeck		
46	Grzegorz Borys		
47	Roman Weidemann		
48	Alexandre Pesot		
49	Soren Pedersen		
50	Antonin Weber		
51	Felix Czapla		
52	Christian Marpe		
53	Gerhardt Weinhold	Markus	
54	Reinhard Blech		
55	Janko Pickert		
56	Wolfgang Eder		
57	Frank Schäfer		
58	Luis van Riet		
59	Jim Herold		
60	Christia Heimstadt		
61	Florent Lefranc		
62	Stephan Klose		
63	Roman Radke		
64	Michael Weinkath		

Copenhagen

by Craig Jones

On a cold morning in early October, more than 500 people of varying nationalities gathered in an anonymous-looking warehouse on a quiet harbour in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. What were they doing there? What was their purpose? And just what exactly was happening with those face-down cards . . .

Yes, it's Grand Prix time again, and the flavor of the month is the brand-new *Onslaught* set. Cycling has returned with a few new tricks, the tribal theme means players will have to consider creature types as well colors when building their decks, and the morph mechanic adds an extra dimension to the game, as players are no longer sure what their opponents' creatures are. Alongside Grand Prix–Utsunomiya, Copenhagen was the first major *Onslaught* Limited tournament, so the main point of interest would be what the world's top players would make of the new format.

Copenhagen certainly had the names: Budde, Baberowski, and Blume from Germany; Thorén and Jonsson from Sweden; the Ruels, Levy, and Tenenbaum from France; Nitter and Herzog from Norway; Wiegersma and Van der Broek from the Netherlands; and travellers from further afield, as Matt Viennau from Canada and Bob Maher Jr. from the U.S. put in an appearance.

The tournament was held at the Lüftkastellet. The venue was originally used as the set for Danish reality TV show "The Bar" and has a kind of "beer tent" feel to it. A total of 507 players, a record for a Scandinavian Grand Prix, made sure it was completely packed.

The early consensus on the set is that red might possess the most depth and certainly has the best common in Sparksmith, while blue was the color most players didn't want to play if they could help it. The set also has its fair share of bomb rares—the cycle of pit fighters in each color is prime example—that can turn the game on their own.

Four players managed to successfully navigate this minefield of power rares and face-down mystery creatures to top the rankings at the end of Day 1 with perfect records: Daniel Eriksson of Sweden, Jens Krause and Dirk Baberowski of Germany, and Martin Struik of the Netherlands. The switch on Day 2 to Rochester Draft would mean those players would need to keep their wits about them, especially as the chasing pack was crammed full of quality players. Some of the pods for Day 2 would not have seemed out of place as a Pro Tour Top 8, including a nightmarish table 7 of Antoine Ruel, Scott Wills, Jens Thorén, Eivind Nitter, Christoph Lippert, Nicolai Herzog, Roland Bode, and Erik Leander.

Onslaught Limited proved itself a very skill-intensive format as a highly experienced Top 8 emerged from Day 2. The first draft gave Kai Budde a deck full of rare bombs like Rorix, Arcanus, Goblin Sharpshooter, and Blistering Firecat, so it wasn't any surprise to see his name in the Top 8. Joining him were Phoenix Foundation teammate Dirk Baberowski and a third German, Jens Krause, fresh from Top 4 success at Grand Prix–Hamburg two weeks ago. They were joined by a trio of Swedes: the always reliable Jens Thorén, David Linder, and Fredrik Boberg. Frenchman Florent Jeudon again proved he isn't just the third guy on the Ruel brothers' team with another individual Grand Prix Top 8. The last slot was taken by Bob Maher Jr., on a seemingly unstoppable charge to get back onto the Masters.

With such experience present, it was surprising that the draft ended up going a little skewed. In the opinion of most players, blue can only really support one drafter or two at a push, but three players—Baberowski, Linder, and Boberg—got into a battle for it. Linder and Baberowski really got into trouble as their second color, black, had three other drafters. On the other hand, Maher and Krause were more than happy to split the green between them. Budde, with a sizeable air force of Gustcloak Harriers, also seemed strong. Other players would have to rely on their bombs, which included two Akroma's Vengeances, a Grinning Demon, and a Butcher Orgg.

In the end, the only two green mages, Krause and Maher, bulldozed through to meet each other in the final. Krause had the fat, but Maher had the speed and burn that prevailed in a particularly brutal final.

As an ominous aside, as Baberowski lost in the quarters and Blume failed to make Day 2, Kai Budde, with his third place finish, is now the sole leader at the top of the Player of the Year race. The day still belonged to Bob Maher Jr., though, as his comeback continues to gather momentum.

Bob Maher, Jr.

- Onslaught Block -

1	Birchlore Rangers
2	Blistering Craghorn
2	Elvish Warrior
1	Krosan Tusker
1	Skirk Commando
2	Snarling Undorak
1	Spitting Gourna
2	Treespring Lorian
1	Wellwisher
1	Wirewood Elf
1	Wirewood Herald
1	Wirewood Savage
2	Pinpoint Avalanche
2	Shock
1	Solar Blast
1	Vitality Charm
1	Words of War
8	Forest
8	Mountain
1	Tranquil Thicket

sideboard

2	Break Open
1	Commando Raid
1	Crown of Fury
1	Crown of Vigor
1	Dwarven Blastminer
1	Elvish Pathcutter
1	Explosive Vegetation
1	Fever Charm
1	Kamahl's Summons
1	Leery Fogbeast
1	Nosy Goblin
1	Shaleskin Bruiser
1	Skirk Prospector
1	Spitfire Handler
2	Symbiotic Elf
3	Wave of Indifference
1	Wirewood Pride

Rank	Name	Prize	Pro Points
1	Bob Maher, Jr.	$2,400	6
2	Jens Krause	$1,700	5
3	Kai Budde	$1,200	4
4	Fredrik Boberg	$1,000	4
5	Dirk Baberowski	$800	3
6	Jens Thorén	$800	3
7	David Linder	$800	3
8	Florent Jeudon	$800	3
9	Jelger Wiegersma	$500	2
10	Eivind Nitter	$500	2
11	Nicolai Herzog	$500	2
12	Frederic Courton	$500	2
13	Sondre Ellingvaag	$500	2
14	Mats Högdahl	$500	2
15	Olle Råde	$500	2
16	Joost Vollebregt	$500	2
17	Pawel Sierocinski	$250	1
18	Johan Franzén	$250	1
19	René Appel	$250	1
20	Daniel Eriksson	$250	1
21	Amiel Tenenbaum	$250	1
22	Allan Christensen	$250	1
23	Marko Ukskoski	$250	1
24	Julien Colomb	$250	1
25	Mattias Jorstedt	$250	1
26	Niklas Eriksson	$250	1
27	Jan Sorensen	$250	1
28	Pierre Malherbaud	$250	1
29	Martin Struik	$250	1
30	David Brucker	$250	1
31	Scott Wills	$250	1
32	Mikael Polgary	$250	1
33	Peter Laier		
34	Antoine Ruel		
35	Christophe Haim		
36	Palle Poulsen		
37	André Olsson		
38	Andreas Behrens		
39	Michele Slama Saad		
40	Tuomas Vanhanen		
41	Raphael Levy		
42	Roland Bode		
43	Kim Robin Lund		
44	Seppo Toikka		
45	Marcus Lagerström		
46	Stefan Petersen		
47	Markus Kolb		
48	Peter Myrvig		
49	Sam Gomersall		
50	No Netterstrom		
51	Sami Liukka		
52	Allan Hellegaard		
53	Bjørn Gausdal		
54	Pascal Hilker		
55	Alexander Olsen		
56	Christoph Lippert		
57	Erik Leander		
58	Rune Espenhein		
59	Simen Josefsen		
60	Wilco Pinkster		
61	Sune Ellegaard		
62	Quentin Martin		
63	Thomas Pettersson		
64	Klaus Andersen		

Grand Prix Utsunomiya

by Josh Bennett

The dawn of a new set is an exciting time, with the wonders of new card designs, the changes to Constructed formats, and above all, the unexplored territory of Limited. This time around, it was *Onslaught*, and players were chomping at the bit to show their facility with the new morph and tribal mechanics. The venue the night before was crowded not only with 200 or so Grand Prix Trial competitors, but with countless pros throwing down in eight-man drafts. Better yet, they were loving every minute of it.

Saturday morning saw 692 players turn up to fight it out in Sealed Deck. The pros were nervous. Looking at the *Onslaught* spoiler, they were blinded by countless rares that could undo games all by themselves. Exalted Angel headed this list, since it comes out on turn four and makes racing impossible. In draft, the effect of those rares is minimized, but the road to get there would be difficult. Even those players with three byes were facing five rounds of Visara this and Jareth that.

For the most part, their fears were put to rest. Play skill outgunned "busted rare", and the Top 64 was its usual mix of the fortunate, the rising stars, and the established pros. Four players stood undefeated at the end of the day: Eiji Nomura, Masashi Oiso, amateur Ken Kiyota, and thug extraordinaire Masayuki Higashino. Following on their heels were such lights as Shuuhei Nakamura, Jin Okamoto, Tsuyoshi "Mr. Rolly" Fujita, and Itaru Ishida. Sadly, Katsuhiro Mori's stubbornness got the better of him. He played in the event despite a brutal fever and head cold, and wound up misplaying his way through three rounds before dropping.

Day 2 was all about insight. The Japanese *Onslaught* prerelease happened just a week earlier, and with the price of boosters being higher in Japan than in other countries, many of those sitting down to the draft tables were running on intuition alone. The pros had only run through a few drafts as practice, but it was a big leg-up. Another advantage the pros had was that it would be Rochester Draft, not Booster. The additional information would let them adapt to the chaos around them.

Fighting through the new format to the top tables were rising star Shuuhei Nakamura; old pros Tsuyoshi Fujita and Jin Okamoto; and Eiji Nomura, Rei Hashimoto, Masanori Kobayashi, Jun'ichi Kinoshita, and Masashi Ooiso. For the final draft there were a few points of interest. The first few packs were chock-full of green cards, and that led Nomura to go green right behind Kinoshita. That soon went sour, and Nomura supplemented with red cards. His eyes bugged out of his head as Kinoshita opened up Slice and Dice and snatched it from him. The two would fight each other the rest of the draft.

There were, naturally, just two blue drafters at the table by the end of the first pack. One of them was Nakamura, and he was pairing it with red. Red was divided, but he didn't expect a fifth player to enter the fray. Towards the end of the first set of packs, though, Hashimoto opened Dragon Roost, and it was enough for him to choose a second color. It was also shocking that just he and Ooiso were the only players taking white cards. Okamoto, to his right, was monoblack and looking for a second color. It was clear that players were still getting used to *Onslaught*. Nakamura, Oosio, and Hashimoto emerged fro the draft in good position.

Ooiso wasted no time in destroying the pinched Nomura. Kobayashi's blue-black was likewise no match for Hashimoto's near-monowhite monster. Nakamura drew Kinoshita, and like the other quarterfinals, finished it 2-0. Fujita drew Okamoto, and the battle of the "All-Stars with Monocolor Decks" went to Rolly. In the semifinals, the two white decks faced each other. Shocking no one, it went to the long game. At that point, it was all about Hashimoto's Dragon Roost. Oosio stole a game with a barrage of fliers, but it wasn't to be. Fujita's green men also proved no match for Nakamura's tempo game.

The finals were quick and brutal. Nakamura took the first game with Embermage Goblin and a Mistform Wall enchanted with Lavamancer's Skill. The second went to Hashimoto when Nakamura had a sluggish draw and Dragon Roost came down unopposed. The last game was a flash. Nakamura mana-stumbled, and Hashimoto hit with flier after flier. Nakamura flailed, but he was too far behind. Hashimoto stood up to applause. Perhaps this will encourage him to return to his former greatness.

Rei Hashimoto

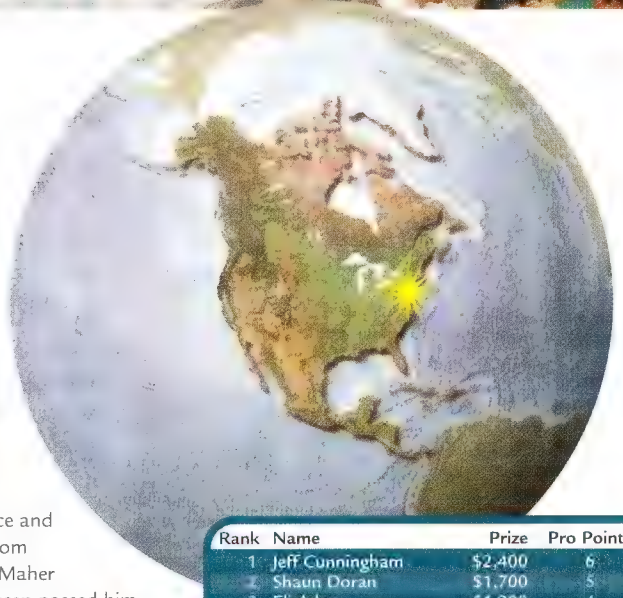
- Onslaught Rochester Draft -

1	Battlefield Medic
1	Catapult Squad
1	Daru Healer
2	Daru Lancer
1	Daunting Defender
2	Disciple of Grace
2	Dive Bomber
1	Glarecaster
1	Glory Seeker
1	Grassland Crusader
2	Gustcloak Harrier
1	Whipcorder
1	Aurification
1	Dragon Roost
1	Pacifism
1	Piety Charm
1	Renewed Faith
1	Shock
1	Unified Strike
7	Mountain
10	Plains

Rank	Name	Prize	Pro Points
1	Rei Hashimoto	$2,400	6
2	Shuhei Nakamura	$1,700	5
3	Tsuyoshi Fujita	$1,200	4
4	Masashi Oiso	$1,000	4
5	Eiji Nomura	$800	3
6	Masanori Kobayashi	$800	3
7	Jin Okamoto	$800	3
8	Junichi Kinoshita	$800	3
9	Tadayoshi Komiya	$500	2
10	Ichiro Shimura	$500	2
11	Yuhi Kubota	$500	2
12	Koichiro Maki	$500	2
13	Akihiro Takakuwa	$500	2
14	Chikara Nakajima	$500	2
15	Masatoshi Uesugi	$500	2
16	Yuki (Miyagi) Murakami	$500	2
17	Yasutoshi Aki	$250	1
18	Yuichi Takasaki	$250	1
19	Fumiki Nakano	$250	1
20	Takao Higaki	$250	1
21	Kenji Tsumura	$250	1
22	Toshiyuki Kuroda	$250	1
23	Tsuyoshi Ikeda	$250	1
24	Ken Kiyota	$250	1
25	Kotaro Ando	$250	1
26	Masayuki Higashino	$250	1
27	Koichi Sakurada	$250	1
28	Satoshi Tachibana	$250	1
29	Yuki Yamazaki	$250	1
30	Masashi Furuya	$250	1
31	Kazuyuki Momose	$250	1
32	Takafumi Sugiki	$250	1
33	Kimio Imai		
34	Keito Rikuno		
35	Sung-Dae Eum		
36	Hitoshi Sato		
37	Kohei Serata		
38	Takashi Fujishiro		
39	Yuji Otsubo		
40	Ren Ishikawa		
41	Hisaya Tanaka		
42	Akira Asahara		
43	Keiichi Chijimi		
44	Sang-Ryeol Lee		
45	Yusuke Tsushima		
46	Itaru Ishida		
47	Kazuya Hirabayashi		
48	Ken Ito		
49	Nobuhiro Ando		
50	Takeichi Suga		
51	Kyosuke Matsuzuki		
52	Fumio Suzuki		
53	Taro Jumonji		
54	Junichiro Bando		
55	Yuji Mukuno		
56	Takahiro Ozawa		
57	Toshihiko Akashi		
58	Yohei Fukui		
59	Tatsuya Maruyama		
60	Kohei Yamadaya		
61	Koji Murata		
62	Takashi Ishihara		
63	Keitaro Yamamoto		
64	Takahiro Saito		

GRAND PRIX Philadelphia

by Aaron Forsythe



Onslaught Limited formats are the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of **Magic**. On one hand is the Draft format, with its well-defined archetypes, subtle tribal tricks, and cycling and morph to help out mana problems. But the Sealed Deck format is another story altogether. Because of the plethora of high-quality rares in the set, every round is a guessing game. What's going to happen when your opponent hits six land? Is he or she going to drop Visara the Dreadful? Slice and Dice the board clean? Or morph a Quicksilver Dragon with mana left to protect it?

Grand Prix-Philadelphia was a showcase for both facets of *Onslaught* Limited. Just under 600 diehards ventured to the outskirts of the City of Brotherly Love to see what wonders awaited them in their tournament packs. The crowd was a diverse one, ranging from well-known **Magic** writers Josh Bennett and The Ferrett, to Pro Tour winners Bob Maher and Zvi Mowshowitz, to foreign travelers Christophe Haim, Franck Canu, and Patrick Mello. They would play eight rounds of Sealed Deck on Saturday, and the Top 64 finishers would take part in two three-round Rochester Drafts on Sunday.

The first day was a long one, but five skilled individuals ran the gauntlet unscathed. Team CMU's Nick Eisel, Boston's Joel Frank, TOGIT's Craig Krempa s, France's Christophe Haim, and Gab Tsang of Canada all put up 8-0 records in Sealed. Granted, the bombs were abundant in their decks; Eisel alone had two Starstorms, and multiple copies of Quicksilver Dragon and Jareth, Leonine Titan could be found among the five, but the cards alone did not win all 40 matches. There were tales going around the hall of decks with multiple "Pit Fighter Legends" and other crazy rares that failed to post the necessary 5-1-1 to advance.

Thanks to the miracle of intentional draws, the cut to 64 was a clean one; anyone with 19 or more match points got to draft, and anyone with 18 or fewer did not, much to the chagrin of 65th-place finisher Brian David-Marshall.

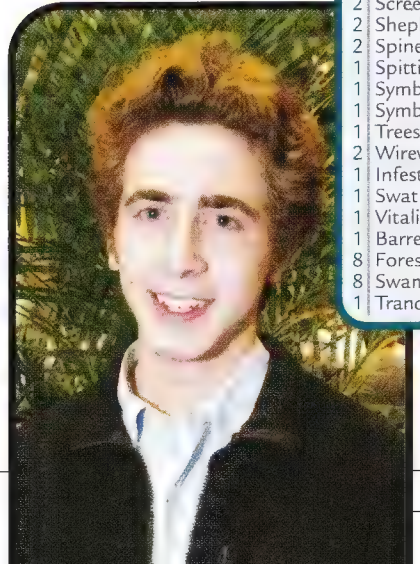
Once the drafting began, all eyes were on Table 1. Gab Tsang, in the dreaded eight-seat, made the best of a bad situation by drafting the bulk of the blue cards at the table and augmenting his army of Wizards with a trio of Lavamancer's Skills. But in round 11, Tsang was upended by Eisel, who was at the time the number-one rated Limited player on ***Magic*** *Online*. Eisel was seated between Jensen and Maher in the draft and "stole" some good cards from each of them—a Slice and Dice from Jensen and a Solar Blast from Maher. They didn't retaliate in kind; Maher passed Eisel an Exalted Angel and Jensen passed him an Aven Brigadier. Those cards combined to give Eisel a monster deck and a sure ticket to the Top 8.

As the players seated themselves for the second draft of the day, things were shaping up for an all-star cast in the elimination rounds. Tsang was right there at the top, as were Maher, Jensen, Floridian Antonio DeRosa, and Canadian whiz kid Jeff Cunningham. A little farther down, it looked like Wise, Turian, New Jersey's Gerard Fabiano, and local college student Chris Manning wou d have a colossal battle for the last slot. But those plans never materialized.

Maher lost to Danny Mandel in round 12 and then couldn't concede to the higher-standing Jensen because the potential Pro Tour points would impact Maher's Masters Series eligibility. Maher defeated Jensen, knocking them both out. Wise defeated Manning and Turian on his way to a showdown with TOGIT's Patrick Sullivan with the Top 8 on the line. Wise made a grievous play error, and the match went to Sullivan. Elsewhere, Gab Tsang and DeRosa couldn't get two wins with their decks, leaving Cunningham alone as the big-name player in the Top 8.

Joining the mild-mannered 18-year-old Cunningham were Eisel, Krempals, Sullivan, Knoxville amateur Eli Aden, Rochester's Shaun Doran, Virginia's Morgan Douglass, and Boston's Jacob Rabinowitz. Although the names might not be recognizable, the group was certainly representing; Pittsburgh, New Jersey, Rochester, Virginia, Boston, and even Tennessee have all been cranking out top-notch pro players recently, and this crew may be part of the next generation of stars.

But in a group like that, the smart money has to be on Cunningham, veteran of one Pro Tour Top 8 and finalist at Grand Prix–Tampa. Even though his black-green deck featured no broken rares and only two removal spells, the Canadian battled through his less-experienced opposition, defeating Rabinowitz, Douglass, and Doran in three games each en route to becoming the Grand Prix Philadelphia champion.



Jeff Cunningham

- Rochester Draft -

2	Aphetto Vulture
1	Broodhatch Nantuko
1	Elvish Warrior
1	Frightshroud Courier
1	Gluttonous Zombie
1	Leery Fogbeast
2	Screeching Buzzard
2	Shepherd of Rot
2	Spined Basher
1	Spitting Gourna
1	Symbiotic Beast
1	Symbiotic Elf
1	Treespring Lorian
2	Wirewood Savage
1	Infest
1	Swat
1	Vitality Charm
1	Barren Moor
8	Forest
8	Swamp
1	Tranquil Thicket

sideboard

2	Accursed Centaur
1	Airborne Aid
1	Anurid Murkdiver
1	Choking Tethers
1	Commando Raid
2	Crown of Fury
1	Crown of Vigor
1	Disciple of Grace
1	Elvish Pioneer
1	Foothill Guide
1	Haunted Cadaver
1	Headhunter
1	Imagecrafter
1	Kamahl's Summons
1	Mana Echoes
1	Solar Blast
1	Sparksmith
1	Trickery Charm
1	Withering Hex

Rank	Name	Prize	Pro Points
1	Jeff Cunningham	$2,400	6
2	Shaun Doran	$1,700	5
3	Eli Aden	$1,200	4
4	Morgan Douglass	$1,000	4
5	Nick Eisel	$800	3
6	Craig Krempals	$800	3
7	Patrick Sullivan	$800	3
8	Jacob Rabinowitz	$800	3
9	Robert Maher	$500	2
10	Gabriel Tsang	$500	2
11	Joel Frank	$500	2
12	Michael Chiarello	$500	2
13	William Jensen	$500	2
14	Matt Severa	$500	2
15	Tom Kelleher	$500	2
16	J Gary Wise	$500	2
17	Matt Boccio	$250	1
18	Michael Turian	$250	1
19	Adam Horvath	$250	1
20	Raphael Cunniff	$250	1
21	Igor Frayman	$250	1
22	Brian Kibler	$250	1
23	Zach Parker	$250	1
24	Eric Frocklich	$250	1
25	Daniel Mandel	$250	1
26	Alex Leader-Smith	$250	1
27	Matt Sitarski	$250	1
28	Jonathan Sonne	$250	1
29	Antonino De Rosa	$250	1
30	Lucas Glavin	$250	1
31	Gerard Fabiano	$250	1
32	Christopher Manning	$250	1
33	Adam Taylor		
34	Dan Rodemann		
35	Stephen Miller		
36	Steven Cowley		
37	Robert NM Sullivan		
38	Devin Low		
39	Ben Stark		
40	Mark Ioli		
41	Zvi Mowshowitz		
42	Joel Lim		
43	Andrew Pacifico		
44	Chris Mondon		
45	Jon Stern		
46	Eugene Harvey		
47	charles steinberg		
48	John Sonmez		
49	Jim Pepe		
50	Chafik Badache		
51	Mark Vizzacco		
52	David Chung		
53	Scott Landis		
54	Rick Radzville		
55	Mike Foley		
56	Christophe Haim		
57	ryan dull		
58	Ilya Kreyer		
59	Eric Franz		
60	Justin Gary		
61	David Munk		
62	David Spears		
63	Brock Parker		
64	Finn Riley		

Willbender

Keeps Kai Safe from Harm

by Brian Kibler

Although it has only seen tournament play for a short time now, the morph mechanic has already had a great impact on Limited formats. Face-down creatures have added a new element of strategy to the game, as players need to pay close attention to the mana their opponents have available to know not only what combat tricks they might be able to play, but also what sort of monsters they may be able to flip over at any moment. This element of mystery provides tremendous bluffing potential—is that face-down creature a Grinning Demon, an Exalted Angel, or a lowly Foothill Guide? Should you Shock it right now to be sure, or run the risk of a 6/6 or 4/5 flier breathing down your neck the next turn? The mind games that morph introduces are almost limitless.

While morph has made its presence known in Limited play, the mechanic has hardly made a dent on Constructed formats. Sure, being able to play Exalted Angel or Grinning Demon early is useful, but the element of mystery is hardly a factor like it is in Sealed Deck or Booster Draft. With the limited number of Constructed-viable morph creatures in *Onslaught,* it's obvious what the face-down creature on the table is simply based on what colors its controller is playing. Black? Grinning Demon. White? Exalted Angel. Blue? Voidmage Prodigy. Red? Blistering Firecat. The list is brief, and hardly makes for the agonizing contemplation of every possible morph creature available at a given mana cost that *Onslaught* Limited play almost requires.

With *Legions,* the veil of mystery just might extend a bit farther. The second set in the *Onslaught* block is sure to bring more top notch morph creatures to keep players on their toes—creatures like Willbender. Willbender is a prime example of a card built entirely around the morph mechanic. Played without morph, Willbender is a vanilla 1/2 for two mana with no redeeming characteristics beyond its creature type, which is Wizard. Squire was never a particularly popular card in Constructed, so one might suspect that Willbender won't be coming into play face-up very often.

When it's played face down, though, Willbender becomes interesting. The ability to change the target of any spell or ability is a powerful one, particularly when it can't be stopped by opposing countermagic. That ability is even more powerful when it costs a mere 1 and is attached to a body. Granted, a 2/2 for 3 isn't the most impressive body to be attached to, but it's substantial, particularly when it teams up with the likes of Voidmage Prodigy and company.

Speaking of Voidmage Prodigy, Willbender makes the fact that Kai's card has morph a bit more interesting. Previously, the best use for the Prodigy's morph ability was to avoid having it die to Engineered Plague, but with Willbender in the mix, every face-down creature becomes a lot scarier. Will your opponent want to Smother one of your creatures when you have an unidentified face-down creature in play and 1 untapped? Or, scarier yet, will your opponent be willing to Time Stretch with the chance that you might be the one taking two extra turns?

Morph 1 (You may play this face down as a 2/2 creature for 3. Turn it face up any time for its morph cost.)
When Willbender is turned face up, change the target of target spell or ability with a single target.

It's also worth noting that Willbender allows for the redirection of not only spells but abilities as well. Has an opponent's Sparksmith got you down? Turn your Willbender face up when your opponent tries to kill something, and that Goblin will be shooting himself in the face. Faceless Butchers will be taking out your opponent's creatures left and right—and all the while, leaving you with a 1/2 body to work with. That might not seem like much, but keep in mind that it's a 1/2 Wizard body, making it good for sacrificing if you have Voidmage Prodigy in play or tapping to fuel Patron Wizard. Tribal decks based around the Wizard theme haven't met with tremendous success yet, but if there are just a few more creatures like Willbender to join the team in *Legions,* Wizard decks just might become a force to be reckoned with.

If you want to beat down with brute force, Beasts are the tribe for you. If you want to burn your opponent up with reckless abandon, throw in your lot with the Goblins. If you're looking to dig in for the long haul and fight the good fight, Clerics or Soldiers may best suit your tastes. But if you want to enjoy the look on your opponent's face when he realizes he just Mind Sludged *himself* . . . well, you have no further to look than Willbender and the Wizards. It's amazing what Gray Ogres can do these days.

Withered Wretch

Goodbye, Graveyard!

by Mike Flores

It's not quite the Best Bear Ever. I'll admit that when, during his *Odyssey* Card Preview, Brian Kibler declared that Wild Mongrel was the King of Bears, I was reluctant to agree. Granted, that was before we knew the power of madness, and instant-speed, 4/4 cantrips for three mana weren't glimmers in the eyes of deck designers. When Kibler said, "his Royal Majesty the Wild Mongrel has arrived," we were really just contemplating synergies to recover lost card economy with flashback spells like Call of the Herd and Chatter of the Squirrel; back then, threshold was considered mostly a Limited mechanic.

Part of the reason that I wasn't ready to concede the coveted Best Bear Ever title to Wild Mongrel before seeing it in action was that everyone's favorite Hound's abilities seemed unexciting to me. Besides, my vote already belonged to a different 2-power, not-particularly-exciting attacker for 1 : River Boa.

While it's arguable that River Boa doesn't count as a bear, being 2/1 rather than 2/2, the friendly Snake had appeared in winning deck after winning deck. He didn't really hit hard, and his abilities were far from earth shattering. Instead, River Boa belonged to a set that was characterized by unimpressive effects for playable costs. While some of the cards in *Visions* eventually served as enablers in combination engines, the flavor I remember most was one of economy, of blue-collar spells doing a little more work than you might expect, considering how inexpensive they were to play.

Visions is still my favorite set.

Which brings us to Withered Wretch. On its face, this Zombie Cleric is a 2/2 creature for . As far as black weenies go, that's a reasonable cost, I suppose, depending on what format you plan to play . . . for 1 you get Filthy Cur and for 2 you get Scathe Zombies, and for a 2/2 is clearly better than both of those. If it had no other abilities, Withered Wretch wouldn't get played in Constructed. The slot has historically been ultra-competitive, putting Black Knight, Knight of Stromgald, and Order of the Ebon Hand into championship deck after championship deck. Today, we have possibly the best 2-power creature for yet -Nantuko Shade—available and competing against our unproven Withered Wretch.

But Withered Wretch has an ability that would have been absolutely broken just one block removed. Do you realize that players, even at the highest levels of Extended competition, are running spells like Entomb and Careful Study—spells that concede card economy—just to dump cards into their graveyards? Do you realize that some of the most impressive offensive creatures in Standard, from the once-dominant Terravore, to still-kicking Mystic Enforcer, Psychatog, and Werebear, rely specifically on graveyard size?

No, Withered Wretch isn't going to be the Michael Jordan of Grizzly Bears. He's more like the Horace Grant of those first several NBA Championships. Withered Wretch will play on the same team as the flashy Nantuko Shade, fill in the mana curve, and help ensure that a beatdown body comes down on turn two. He'll get a couple of points in, sure, but Withered Wretch's real value is that at the end of the opponent's turn, when you've got a swamp or two open, he'll rob the other guy of threshold. He'll make sure that when you alpha strike next turn, the opponent isn't going to have the option of activating his recurring Reverant Mantra. He might even let you wreck a more careless opponent with a block, when, inexplicably, his or her wave of creatures no longer has flying. Once in a while, you'll play the Wretch, spend two more mana, and make a couple of 6/6 game-winners disappear before they hit the board.

Withered Wretch
Creature — Zombie Cleric
1: Remove target card in a graveyard from the game.
Once it consecrated the dead. Now it desecrates them.
Illus. Tim Hildebrandt
2/2

As a graveyard-depleting strategy, Withered Wretch is better than most of the options we have these days. He's more efficient than Steamclaw, and even the mighty, departed Phyrexian Furnace could only do so much in a certain space of turns. If he sticks around for more than a couple of turns, it's unlikely that any Standard blue-green deck is going to keep pace, as its Circular Logics start to look like Force Voids.

Then again, Withered Wretch is also kind of small, and in a post-Smother era, really easy to remove. I think that this creature's value is as a vanilla beater that does a little more than you might expect from a vanilla beater. He doesn't win the game all by himself, but he makes it harder for most of the decks you'll play against these days to give you their best games.

Grinning Demon Best Juzám Ever?

by Dave Price

Most Magic players have heard the tales of Juzám Djinn, even if they started playing long after its introduction in the *Arabian Nights* set. It was the largest, most efficient beatdown creature that players had ever seen, weighing in at 5/5 for the price of {4}{B}{B}. The catch was that during each upkeep, Juzám Djinn would deal 1 point of damage to its controller. That was certainly a price worth paying for a 5/5 monster that would tear the opponent's team to shreds.

Those players who never got to see the fear in their opponents' eyes as a Juzám Djinn entered the attack phase are about to get their chance. With *Onslaught* comes an even bigger beatdown creature, Grinning Demon.

Grinning Demon has twice the Juzám's drawback but makes up for it by being even larger, a 6/6 creature for {4}{B}{B}. Not only that, but Grinning Demon is equipped with the new morph mechanic, which is useful if a player is too low on life to handle Grinning Demon's upkeep as it allows Grinning Demon to be played as a vanilla 2/2 creature for {B}. In addition, the morph ability allows Grinning Demon to come out one turn earlier as a 2/2 for {B} that turns into a 6/6 attacker on the fourth turn for {4}{B}{B}.

Any deck that wishes to incorporate Grinning Demon has to be aggressive, as it doesn't make the best blocker, slowly sucking its controller's life points away. With a cost of {4}{B}{B}, a player will be most likely to cast it as a 6/6 on turn four if he or she is playing monoblack or primarily black, but it's not too tough to run Grinning Demon in a two-color deck either. If a two-color player is having trouble finding the second black mana, he or she can make Grinning Demon useful by playing him as a 2/2 for {B}. Still, a second color doesn't offer black that much these days, as it already has efficient creatures, discard, and creature removal spells. In addition, the more non-black lands that the deck uses, the less powerful Nantuko Shade will be, which is one of black's finest creatures to date.

The goal of "Grinning Beatdown" is simple: play efficient beatdown creatures, remove opposing creatures, and attack the opponent. It has a few cards that can disrupt the opponent's game plan along the way, one of the strong points of black.

So let's talk about the beatdown. Grinning Beatdown contains Nantuko Shade, one of the most efficient black creatures ever printed. Nantuko Shade is a 2/1 for {B}{B} that gets +1/+1 until end of turn for each {B} spent. The Shade's ability is the primary reason for making this a monoblack deck. A new addition to the black beatdown deck is Wretched Anurid, a 3/3 creature for {B}. Wretched Anurid has a manageable drawback, it causes its controller to lose 1 life whenever a creature comes into play. This drawback is similar to the drawbacks of Juzám Djinn and Grinning Demon in that it is irrelevant until the controller actually dies from it. In an aggressive enough deck, the opponent is often forced to deal with the creature before the drawback becomes a serious problem (or the opponent loses).

Part of any good beatdown strategy is removing potential blockers. Grinning Beatdown contains Chainer's Edict and Smother. Chainer's Edict is a familiar card from Tempest: for {1}, target player must sacrifice a creature. The Edict is powerful because it can take care of any creature, including Wild Mongrel, Psychatog, and Phantom Centaur. Smother is a new addition from *Onslaught*. Also for the price of {1}, it's an instant that destroys a target creature with a converted mana cost of 1 or less. Smother kills Wild Mongrels, Psychatogs, Roar of the Wurm tokens, Goblin Piledrivers and the list goes on and on. In fact, pretty much the only things it doesn't kill are Grinning Demon and Braids, Cabal Minion.

The deck contains cards to disrupt the opponent's game plan, including Duress. A sorcery for {B} that allows you to take a noncreature, nonland card from the opponent's hand, Duress allows the deck to begin screwing with the opponent's game plan on turn one. In addition to Duress, there's Mesmeric Fiend, a 1/1 creature for {B} that allows you to remove a card in the opponent's hand from the game. Sure, if the opponent kills the Mesmeric Fiend, he or she will get the card back, but opponents who kill Fiends aren't doing other useful things like developing their boards or killing your Nantuko Shade.

Despite the simplicity of the deck, there are a number of interesting and powerful interactions. The deck contains Braids, a 2/2 for {4}{B}{B} that requires each player to sacrifice a permanent at the beginning of his or her upkeep. This can be annoying for combo and control decks, and it's even good against other beatdown decks, as you will be prepared for it and your opponent will not. Braids can help you out in a number of ways. What happens when your Wretched Anurid or Grinning Demon becomes too much for you to handle? If you're getting low on life and you can finish the beatdown without them, you can sacrifice them to Braids. In addition to getting rid of creatures that have overstayed their welcome, Braids works well with a new creature from Onslaught: Rathing Reanimator. Rathing Reanimator is a 2/2 for {B} that puts a 2/2 Zombie token into play when it or another Cleric goes to the graveyard. This one card provides two permanents to sacrifice to Braids (not to mention if you get multiple Rathing Reanimators out. While a 2/2 for {B} isn't the biggest creature on the block, the fact that it has to be killed twice makes it a valuable addition to the deck.

Perhaps the deck's greatest weakness is that its removal spells, Chainer's Edict and Smother, do nothing if the opponent doesn't have any creatures. Unlike red decks, black decks can't send their removal to the opponent's head. In the event that this deck gets matched up against a creatureless deck like a Meren's White control deck or a black control deck that kills with Corrupt, Grinning Beatdown has eight dead cards in the main deck. That's where the sideboard comes in. Blackmail, a new card from *Onslaught*, costs {B} and allows you to take one of three cards from the opponent's hand (the opponent picks which three you get to look at). There is also Rancid Earth, a land destruction spell for {3}{B}{B}, which can be equally powerful against combo and control, depriving them of a land and leaving them with one less permanent when Braids comes into play. Besides the additional disruption in the sideboard, there is also Engineered Plague, a powerful weapon against Squirrel Nest, Goblin decks, and any new tribal decks that come out of *Onslaught*. The final card in the sideboard is Overgrown Cemetery, an enchantment for {1}{B} that allows you to return a creature card to your hand if you have four or more creatures in the graveyard during your upkeep. Overgrown Cemetery is good against decks with loads of removal, like black control or the black-red Magnivore deck. Opponents can only play Chainer's Edict, Innocent Blood, and Mudhole to get rid of your creatures before they run out of gas, and with Overgrown Cemetery in play, you may never run out.

So does Grinning Demon have what it takes to lead this horde of black creatures to victory? Both the creature and the deck have the potential for glory, but a lot of it depends on what the other decks in the new Standard are like. If I were a gambling man, though, I would bet on black.

Grinning Beatdown

4 Braids, Cabal Minion
4 Grinning Demon
4 Mesmeric Fiend
4 Nantuko Shade
4 Rotting Rematerializer
4 Wrexial Arsonist

4 Chainer's Edict
4 Duress
4 Smother

24 Swamp

Sideboard:
4 Blackmail
4 Engineered Plague
1 Overgrild Cemetary
3 Rancid Earth

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Onslaught Goes Online

Standard Decks at the Magic Invitational

by Brian Kibler

Most of the writing that has been done examining the new Standard environment has approached the subject from the perspective of what it isn't—that is, what cards are rotating out with *Invasion* block and the impact this will have on established deck types. Initially, this approach makes sense. It's easiest to define the environment through its differences from the old Standard, determining which strategies will endure and which will fall apart when key cards rotate out. But once the format starts to come into its own, it must be approached not merely as the remnants of the old Standard environment, but rather understood in itself.

The most prominent source of data about the current Standard environment is clearly the **Magic** Invitational. Sixteen of the top players in the world converged on Seattle in early October to duke it out for the right to design a card. While only three of the fifteen rounds of the Invitational featured the new Standard environment, and playtesting and preparation for the event tends to be more relaxed than for other major tournaments, the decks played by the competitors are representative of much of the format. As such, these decklists are a basis for an examination of the environment.

The most popular deck type at the Invitational—to the surprise of no one –was blue-green madness, played in some form by five of the sixteen competitors. Chris Pikula, Brian Davis, and Alex Shvartsman all played straight blue-green, while Gary Wise and Eivind Nitter played a more threshold oriented blue-green-white version. The two color decks looked almost identical to their *Odyssey* block counterparts, with Merfolk Looter and City of Brass as the only notable additions. While these cards may not seem like they'd have a tremendous impact on the way the deck performs, they do provide something blue-green in block lacked: consistency.

City of Brass functions like a poor man's Yavimaya Coast, shoring up the biggest problem the madness deck suffered from in *Odyssey* block. Between a lack of dual lands and an even distribution in its colored mana costs, including early plays, blue-green in Block often had difficulty playing its spells. City of Brass helps alleviate this problem, albeit painfully. Merfolk Looter increases the deck's consistency as well, providing an efficient madness outlet beyond Wild Mongrel and Aquamœba. Despite its fragility, Merfolk Looter is the most-feared two-drop in the blue-green deck due to its ability to provide card advantage while allowing Basking Rootwalla, Arrogant Wurm, and Circular Logic to be played for their madness costs.

The blue-green-white deck played by Gary Wise and Eivind Nitter took a different approach than the *Odyssey* block replicants, giving up much of the madness element for a threshold-oriented strategy. Merfolk Looter, Arrogant Wurm, and City of Brass are replaced by Werebear, Nimble Mongoose, Mystic Enforcer, and a plethora of *Onslaught* fetch lands. The interaction between the fetch lands and threshold creatures is so powerful that Wise and Nitter chose to play a single Polluted Delta—without a swamp to search for—in addition to the full amount of Windswept Heaths and Flooded Strands.

The aim of this deck is made clear by looking at the mana base: play with the most efficient spells possible. The fetch lands not only get you the land you want right away, but they also thin land out of your deck so you won't draw it in the future. This effect is minute but significant, and this deck takes advantage of it. Playing with nine sac lands ensures that the blue-green-white deck will draw more spells over the course of the game than the opponent, which allows it to play with only the most efficient spells possible. It runs Unsummon rather than Æther Burst, because while Æther Burst is better in the long game when one can expect to draw multiple copies, this deck wins by virtue of its efficiency, not its resilience, making Unsummon the bounce spell of choice. Between Unsummon, eight one-drops, and ten two-drops, this deck is also well set up to take advantage of Standstill, as it will almost always have an advantage in board position early in the game.

Despite all of these advantages, neither the blue-green madness decks nor the blue-green-white threshold decks performed particularly well. Only Chris Pikula managed a winning record, going 2-1, while both Alex Shvartsman and Eivind Nitter finished 0-3. This result seems surprising, given the success of the archetype in Block Constructed and the old Standard environment. The sample size is a small one, but blue-green seems to be one of the more fragile "Decks to Beat" of recent times. The difficulty in dealing with threatening permanents, most notably Opposition, combined with a reliance on madness enablers living long enough to do their job in a format with Smother and Chainer's Edict, makes blue-green a less dominant strategy than previous top contenders like Psychatog. In a field where everyone expects and prepares for blue-green, expect it to still perform well but never dominate like the top decks of the past.

That said, there was no single deck at the Invitational that could be construed as "dominant". There was, however, a particular strategy that fared better than any other. Decks built around Opposition posted the best overall record in the event, as Gabriel Nassif and Olivier

Ruel both finished with 3-0 records, and Tomi Walamies ended up 2-1. The similarities between these three decks begin and end with Opposition, the only card included in all three.

The most familiar of these decks was that piloted by Olivier Ruel. It looks like a modernization of the pre-*Onslaught* "Squirrel-Opposition" builds that were popular at Nationals and Worlds this past summer. The loss of Flametongue Kavu and Fire/Ice is as much a blessing as a curse—the Opposition player no longer has access to such efficient removal, but neither do his or her opponents. Because the deck relies heavily on the acceleration of Llanowar Elves and Birds of Paradise, Fire/Ice was the most frightening card for it. The inability to destroy an opposing Merfolk Looter is offset by the knowledge that one's own Looter or Bird won't die to an opposing Fire on turn two.

The departure of Flametongue Kavu and Repulse ought to return Call of the Herd to prominence, so it's no surprise to see a full complement of the Elephant maker in Ruel's deck. Squirrel Nest had a cloud cast over its day in the sun when Cunning Wish-based Psychatog decks were all the rage, but the departure of Fact or Fiction and Nightscape Familiar from the environment has weakened such strategies. Without the fear of Aura Graft being Wished up to steal them, Squirrel Nests are once again a significant threat.

Most important, of course, is Opposition itself. In a field where blue-green madness is the most-anticipated deck, Opposition is extremely powerful. Blue-green madness decks rely on creatures to win and generally have no way to remove Opposition once it hits play. When every Llanowar Elves or Birds of Paradise can neutralize an Arrogant Wurm, Wild Mongrel, or Wurm token, it's quite difficult for the madness deck to win. Combine this with a smattering of efficient, hard-to-remove creatures like Phantom Centaur and Ravenous Baloth, and it appears that you have a recipe for success.

Gabriel Nassif's recipe for success, however, was not so traditional. In fact, it was downright bizarre. Nassif played what was essentially a "good stuff" deck, dipping into the best aggro-control cards in green, blue, and black. It's rare that you see a deck that plays green almost entirely for mana creatures, but that's what Nassif did, with Call of the Herd as his only main deck green card other than Birds of Paradise and Llanowar Elves. The choice makes sense, though, as the rest of his deck relies heavily on mana acceleration to be effective.

Assuming a first turn mana creature, Nassif's deck can present some powerful early plays. Turn two Call of the Herd is a fine opening, but turn two Shadowmage Infiltrator is something else entirely. Follow up either one of those with turn three Braids, Cabal Minion or Opposition, and your opponent had better have an answer quickly, or he or she will be in serious trouble. The rest of the deck consists of efficient utility cards, with Memory Lapse to force spells through and Smother to clear Wild Mongrels and other troublesome creatures out of the way. It's a strange collection of cards, but an effective one, as Nassif piloted it to an undefeated record.

The last Opposition deck from the Invitational is a more familiar design than Nassif's, and should come as no surprise given its pilot. Tomi Walamies updated the Punisher Battle Screech deck from *Odyssey* Block Constructed for the new Standard environment. With as many token creatures as the deck can produce, Opposition was an obvious fit. Like Glory in the Block version of the deck, Opposition provides a powerful weapon for breaking through creature stalemates. Unlike Glory, Opposition is also powerful against decks where creature combat is not a factor. While Glory would suffice against blue-green decks, against decks like Mirari's Wake, Opposition provides significant disruption in what might otherwise be an unwinnable matchup.

Tap an untapped creature you control: Tap target artifact, creature, or land
Search target player's library for up to three cards with flashback and put them into that player's graveyard. Then the player shuffles his or her library.
Put two 1/1 white Bird creature tokens with flying into play.
Flashback—Tap three untapped white creatures you control.

Opposition isn't the only card that the Punisher deck gets from its graduation into the Standard format. *Onslaught* bolsters the deck's traditionally anemic creature base, providing Weathered Wayfarer and Whipcorder to replace Suntail Hawk and Beloved Chaplin. Whipcorder provides an easy answer to large creatures while serving as a solid beatdown body. Weathered Wayfarer generates a steady supply of card advantage and mana fixing, making the double-blue mana cost of Opposition not at all prohibitive. The twelve dual lands, in the form of Skycloud Expanse, Adarkar Wastes, and Flooded Strand, improve the deck's mana consistency, allowing it to run only four islands.

All of this comes together to form a deck that has all the tools to defeat opposing beatdown and control decks alike—a common theme among Opposition decks, as Opposition itself is good at both shutting down opposing assaults and depriving opponents of crucial mana. The Quiet Speculation engine this deck brings with it from *Odyssey* block makes it capable of explosive starts, and although it lacks the countermagic of other Opposition decks to maintain control in the midgame, the ability to Speculation for Deep Analysis gives the deck quite a bit of staying power. Despite its vulnerability to mass

✦ RON SPENCER

removal spells like Pyroclasm, Wrath of God, and Mutilate, expect this deck to perform well.

The last archetype to show up in numbers during the Standard portion of the Invitational was Mirari's Wake. Both Jens Thorén and I played Wake decks, but while the basic strategy of the two decks was similar, our implementation of it was quite different. Thorén's deck was built around Cunning Wish, which allowed him to play only three colors, while my deck dipped into red for Burning Wish. Each of us posted a 2-1 record, indicating that either version of the deck has potential.

The Burning Wish version is about raw power. Patterned after the *Odyssey* Block Constructed deck designed by Pat Chapin, the deck uses Krosan Verge and Rampant Growth to accelerate its mana to critical mass, staying alive with Moment's Peace and Wrath of God. Once the deck gets Mirari's Wake in play, winning becomes almost incidental, as Burning Wish can fetch Firecat Blitz, Quiet Speculation can search out Crush of Wurms, or one can Time Stretch and burn through the entire deck with Compulsion before the opponent gets a chance to untap. Burning Wish can fetch a number of utility spells, from the fourth Wrath of God to Creeping Mold, Gerrard's Wisdom, Overmaster, and more, providing a solution to virtually any problem.

The Cunning Wish version of the deck is more of a traditional control deck that runs Mirari's Wake. Where the Burning Wish deck overpowers the opponent, the Cunning Wish deck plays like blue-white control early on, controlling the game with Memory Lapse, Circular Logic, and Wrath of God, until it gets Mirari's Wake and Mirari itself into play, which is when things get really interesting. With Mirari, Cunning Wish allows a player to fetch both an instant from the sideboard and a copy of Cunning Wish, allowing for infinite recursion of any spell that can remove itself from the game. This makes Elephant Ambush the ideal win condition, as it can be played and flashed back an indefinite number of times to create a steady stream of 4/4 or 5/5 Elephant tokens.

Both of these builds have their advantages and disadvantages. The Burning Wish version is more powerful against beatdown strategies, due to its mana acceleration and additional access to Moment's Peace and Wrath of God with Quiet Speculation and Burning Wish. The Cunning Wish version is more suited to playing a control game, with seven counters to back up its threats. Each of them is viable for tournament play, and it seems likely that we will see more of Mirari's Wake in the months to come.

Choose an instant card you own from outside the game, reveal that card, and put it into your hand. Remove Cunning Wish from the game.
Creatures you control get +1/+1.
Whenever you tap a land for mana, add one mana to your mana pool of any type that land produced.
The land drank power from the Mirari as though it had thirsted forever.
Protection from black
Phantom Centaur comes into play with three +1/+1 counters on it.
If damage would be dealt to Phantom Centaur, prevent that damage. Remove a +1/+1 counter from Phantom Centaur.

The other decks at the Invitational were each piloted by only one player. The most successful of the loners was Jon Finkel, who posted an impressive 3-0 showing with a Battle of Wits deck, which, by his own admission, ought to be awful. Playing with 250 of the best cards in the format can lead to some degenerate draws, particularly when four of them have text that includes the words "win the game."

The loss of *Invasion* block's comes-into-play-tapped duals and opposing-color painlands forced Finkel to kick white to the curb. The loss of Wild Research, perhaps the most powerful card in the pre-*Onslaught* Wits deck, is also

painful—the ability to search for any instant or enchantment in a 250-card deck can't be overlooked. Other Wild Research decks could run out of spells to fetch, or wouldn't always have an answer for a particular situation, Wits decks could get everything from Exclude to Dismantling Blow to Urza's Rage, or use the white ability to go for Battle of Wits itself. Finkel's version didn't have this option, but it did have Wishes, providing similar access to powerful solutions in the sideboard. While Jon's success with the deck proves that Battle can win, it shouldn't necessarily be taken to mean that it's a great choice for a competitive Standard tournament.

CARL CRITCHLOW

The next most successful singleton was Itaru Ishida. While APAC's representatives to the invitational have been known for their unusual Constructed designs, Ishida surprised everyone by playing something relatively mundane, yet entirely unexpected—green-red beatdown. Ishida's choice seems particularly odd given the archetype's traditional difficulty in dealing with green-blue—especially its Roar of the Wurm tokens—but Itaru managed to avoid madness decks entirely, running into both Mirari's Wake decks and Dave Price's Goblin deck, where Phantom Centaurs proved truly monstrous.

Ishida's design doesn't have any particularly unusual elements to it. He did choose to play a single copy of Rorix Bladewing, along with a second in his sideboard, but it's unclear whether this was a strategic or stylistic decision. In all of the matches in which he drew Rorix, Ishida never had the mana to play the Dragon, so it seems like its inclusion might be a poor choice. Blistering Firecat also makes an appearance, which makes a great deal of sense alongside the twelve burn spells Ishida ran.

The oddest part of Ishida's deck is his sideboard. Three copies of Naturalize are just about the only things that seem to fit, with the rest of the board looking like a random smattering of cards, but on closer examination, much of it makes sense. Krosan Reclamations provide him with a solution to Wonder, albeit a rather inefficient one, while Moment's Peace and Threaten are both included as tools to race against other beatdown decks. Threatening a Wurm token provides quite the swing against blue-green, depriving them of a blocker while forcing a large chunk of damage through. With so much burn in his deck, it seems like one attack like that might be all Ishida needs to turn the tide against blue-green madness. Whether green-red will be a force to be reckoned with in Standard is unclear, but if nothing else, attacking with big monsters and throwing burn at your opponent's face is always fun.

If Ishida's choice of green-red was unexpected, Dave Humphreys decision to play Psychatog was routine. "The Hump" has had many of his top tournament finishes this season with Psychatog, and he chose to go with his old standby in this tournament, despite rumors of its demise. The loss of Nightscape Familiar and Fact or Fiction took some of the bite out of everyone's favorite cookie monster look-alike, but apparently Psychatog won't die so easily. With a deck full of cantrips and card drawing -even Inspiration got a chance to get off the bench—Humphries fought his way to a 2-1 record.

Dave managed this on the back of Future Sight, *Onslaught*'s most hyped card advantage machine. With so many low-cost cantrips in his deck, Future Sight allows Humphreys to burn through his deck at an extraordinary pace, providing both card advantage and Psychatog food. Eventually, either the toothy monster comes in for one enormous bite, or the world picks up and starts over again. Even without Nightscape Familiar, Upheaval remains a powerful reset button. While its time of dominance may be over, let no one say that Psychatog is truly dead.

The less successful singleton decks at the invitational, posting records of 1-2, 0-3, and 0-3, were Carlos Romao's blue-black Braids deck, Diego Ostrovich's blue-white "Counter-Mobilization" deck and Dave Price's monored Goblin deck. Romao's deck seems like it might have potential, but its cards aren't as powerful as those in the more successful deck—Nantuko Shade without Cabal Coffers can't compete with Wild Mongrel and Arrogant Wurm. Ostrovich's Mobilization deck harkens back to old "Counterpost" designs, but unlike Counterpost's highly efficient counters and removal in the form of Force of Will and Swords to Plowshares, Diego's deck fumbled with clunky spells like Discombobulate and Akroma's Vengeance. In a format where Wild Mongrel is king, spells that cost that much mana need to be a lot more powerful to compete. Dave Price's Goblin deck, as well, was simply outgunned—Goblin Sledder can't compete with Arrogant Wurm or Phantom Centaur. These three decks didn't have enough weight to throw around; while their opponents were doing ridiculous things with undercosted madness effects and Mirari's Wakes, they were playing fair, paying reasonable costs for spells that did reasonable things.

The moral of the story of the Invitational, then, seems to be that decks that don't play fair, win. The most successful decks were Opposition decks, which only need to get one enchantment into play to turn every creature in play into an Icy Manipulator. The next most successful set of decks were the Wake decks, which outmuscled their opponents once they, too, resolved a single enchantment. Perhaps the day has returned that enchantment and artifact removal is worthy of main deck consideration, as it was long ago. In the playground that is Standard, the big kids don't play fair.

Tribal Decks

Creature Types Matter in All Formats

by Brian David-Marshall

Tribal decks have been a part of Constructed **Magic** as long as I can remember. I guess Brian Weissman's "The Deck" was technically an Angel deck. "Slight Knight", "Fish" (Merfolk), and various "Sligh" (Dwarves and Goblins) builds were all tribal in nature. The most successful tribe that saw extensive Constructed play was Slivers.

Since the release of *Onslaught*, much has been made of the new "Tribal" theme. In regards to Limited play, there's no shortage of advice: How many Elves you need to take advantage of Lord of the Leaves in Sealed Deck? Is Catapult Master a first pick in Draft? That kind of thing. I haven't seen too much written about how the tribal themes of *Onslaught* will effect Constructed play . . . well, I guess that's not entirely true. One tribe deck in particular seems to have jumped to the front of the line in everybody's playtest gauntlet for the upcoming Champs season . . . Goblins! Goblin Piledriver is just the card that red mages have been pining for, and he seems to be living up to the early hype.

GOBLINS

With this deck, you can hack your opponent's life total to 4 by the end of turn three. Turn one: Raging Goblin, attack. Turn two: Goblin Piledriver, attack with Raging Goblin. Turn three: Goblin Piledriver, play Reckless Charge on the Piledriver, and attack for 14! Each Piledriver gets +4/+0 for the other two Goblins attacking, and the one you just played gets an additional +3/+0 from the Reckless Charge. That leaves your stupefied opponent at just 4 life when you take into account the two pecks from the Raging Goblin.

Goblins

- Standard - November 2002 -

4	Goblin Piledriver
4	Goblin Raider
4	Goblin Sledder
4	Raging Goblin
4	Sparksmith
4	Browbeat
2	Goblin War Drums
4	Reckless Charge
4	Shock
4	Volcanic Hammer
4	Barbarian Ring
4	Bloodstained Mire
10	Mountain
4	Wooded Foothills

Even if your opponent can stabilize and remove your creatures, it's a small matter to finish him or her off with burn. I prefer the instant speed of Shock over the reusability of Firebolt—I don't want to get to five mana with this deck.

Volcanic Hammer clears the way for your Piledrivers and can be aimed at your opponent's head for the final points of damage.

I've seen listings that include additional burn like Firebolt or Lava Dart, but I prefer to use Browbeat in that slot. This deck deals so much early damage that your opponent can't afford to pay the 5 life and must allow you to draw cards. If they deny you cards, you get to devour a fourth of their original life total.

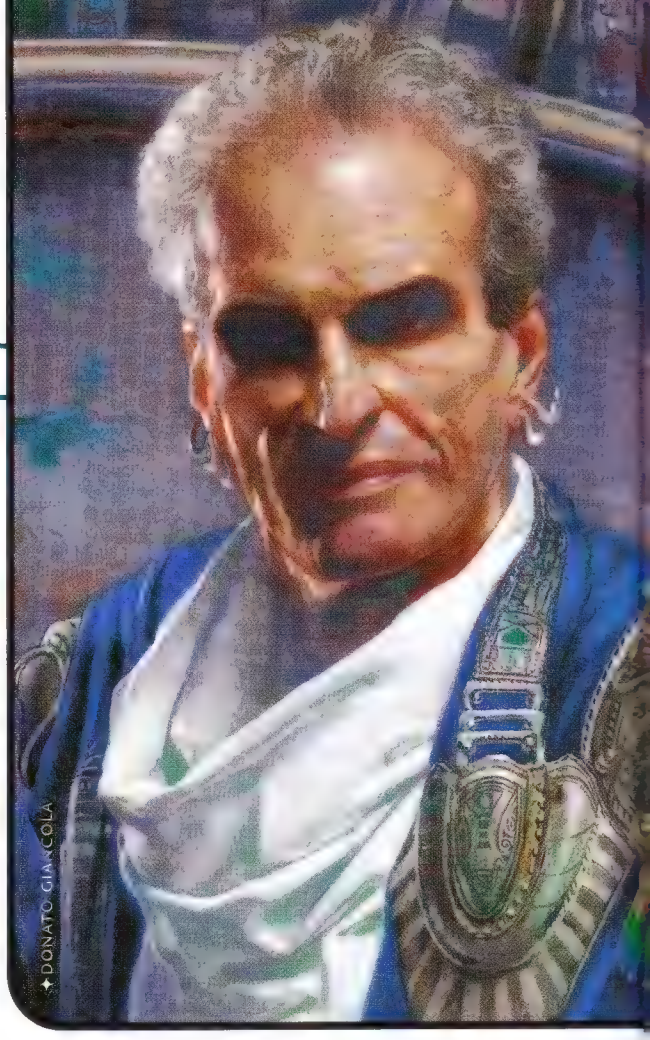
Sparksmith is quite the stud in this deck, handily killing Arrogant Wurms and Wild Mongrels. Granted, you take as much damage as your opponent's creatures, but you're playing a Goblin deck—what were you going to do, block? It's like the Arrogant Wurm attacked you for 4 and then died. Think of Sparksmith as the red No Mercy that occasionally gets to swing for 1. If you really don't like him, you can give Goblin Sharpshooter a try. He interacts quite nicely with Goblin Sledder. Just make sure you give the Sparksmith a tumble first—you won't be sorry.

Goblin War Drums saw minor action during the last Junior Super Series season as a way around a Psychatog sitting around waiting for a big turn. While you can kill Arrogant Wurms and Wild Mongrels, a Roar of the Wurm token might present a problem, not to mention Psychatog. A single chump blocking creature will not be enough to throw off the math when you attack with your Goblin army following their pounding War Drums.

Eight fetch lands help you reach threshold for the four Barbarian Rings—8 crucial, uncounterable points of damage. The fetch lands are not absolutely necessary, but the last thing this deck wants to draw after turn three is a land. The fetch lands make sure you have the mana you need early on and make it less likely that you will draw it late.

The sideboard I leave completely up to you. Remember that you can run one Forest or one Swamp to support cards like Engineered Plague or Naturalize from your sideboard. Obviously, Flaring Pain is a must-have against decks running Moment's Peace. I also recommend Goblin Pyromancer as a "Wrath" against other Goblin decks. Slice and Dice might be a standout sideboard card—just plan on cycling it. Elves, Goblins, Birds, and Wizards will never know what hit them.

Another early front-runner is a Wizard deck built around last year's Invitational winner's card, Voidmage Prodigy. The seeds for this deck were sprinkled throughout the previous block. The most obvious cards to work with are Patron Wizard and the previous Invitational card, Shadowmage Infiltrator.



WIZARDS

Wizards
- Standard - November 2002 -

4 Hapless Researcher
4 Patron Wizard
4 Shadowmage Infiltrator
4 Temporal Adept
4 Voidmage Prodigy
4 Chainer's Edict
4 Circular Logic
4 Counterspell
2 Oversold Cemetery
2 Smother
2 Island
4 Polluted Delta
4 Swamp
4 Underground River

The basic strategy for this deck is to play out Wizards on the first three turns, culminating in a Patron Wizard. At this point, you have a virtual Force Spike, Miscalculation, or Mana Leak by tapping one, two, or three Wizards. If your opponent manages to get any permanents in under your curve, you can use Chainer's Edict, Smother, or Temporal Adept to deal with them.

Rumor has it that Kai wanted to design a card that allowed him to sacrifice Jon Finkel's, Chris Pikula's, and Olle Räde's cards (all Wizards), but you probably won't want to sacrifice Johnny **Magic**, as the Shadowmage Infiltrator provides one of your victory conditions, drawing you other Wizards to sacrifice along the way.

This deck can also lock out an opponent within the first few turns of the game by using Temporal Adept to return one of your opponent's lands to his or her hand every turn. If you have Patron Wizard and a couple of other Wizards, your opponent won't have the mana to play multiple threats in one turn or pay for the Patron Wizard's ability.

It's too easy to put Oversold Cemetery in just about every tribe deck that has access to black mana. I only wanted to use it one deck, and I think it belongs in the Wizards more than any of the others. It combos nicely with both Hapless Researcher and Voidmage Prodigy. You can use Hapless Researcher every turn as an ersatz Compulsion, or with four mana, you can use Voidmage Prodigy every turn as a Counterspell without any other Wizards in play.

I'm not completely sold on Circular Logic in this deck. I think Ixidor's Will is too situational to make it, but Complicate might be a reasonable choice. Memory Lapse might also fit in well, buying you a turn to get either Voidmage Prodigy or Patron Wizard and his cronies ready to counter on the next turn.

I think you want to have Arcane Laboratory in your sideboard—it might even be main deck worthy. If people start running Death Pulse and Solar Blast (uncounterable removal for Voidmage Prodigy when cycled), you might want to consider Mage's Guile. If players start cycling Slice and Dice, you're on your own. Additional Smothers are also recommended out of the board.

On of my favorite tribes has always been Elves. For the last few Extended seasons, I've been playing a deck that abuses the mana generation of Priest of Titania, Intruder Alarm, and Tradewind Rider.

ELVES

Elves
- Extended - November 2002 -

4 Birchlore Rangers
4 Deranged Hermit
4 Llanowar Elves
4 Multani's Acolyte
4 Priest of Titania
4 Tradewind Rider
4 Accumulated Knowledge
2 Foil
3 Intruder Alarm
3 Intuition
2 Misdirection
2 Stroke of Genius
8 Forest
2 Gaea's Cradle
6 Island
4 Yavimaya Coast

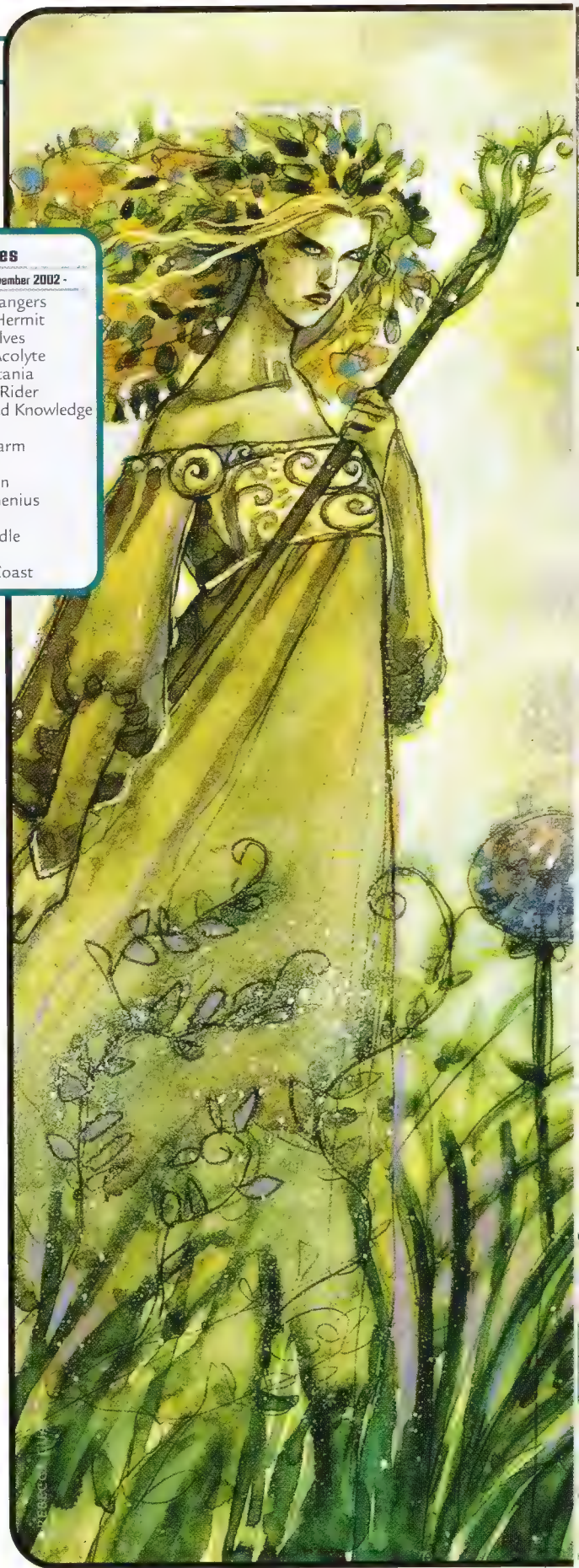
Not only is this deck capable of winning on turn four, but it can also draw all of its cards, make infinite mana, generate infinite squirrels, return all of your opponent's permanents to his or her hand, and Stroke of Genius your opponent out of the game. Basically, you need to have an active Tradewind Rider, two Elves, a spare Priest of Titania, and an Intruder Alarm in play when you play a Multani's Acolyte or Deranged Hermit.

If you play the former, you can tap your Priest of Titania for three mana to play it and then use Tradewind Rider and the other two Elves to return it to your hand. You net one mana in the exchange and have an untapped Priest (thanks to Intruder Alarm) to repeat the process. When you tap the Priest and replay the Acolyte, the Tradewind and all three Elves untap, allowing you to draw a card and repeat the process. Each time you do this, you net an extra mana and draw a card. Eventually, you'll pick up your entire deck and can play Birchlore Rangers to make a blue mana to play your Stroke of Genius with four counters to protect it.

If you play the Hermit, you'll put *five* triggers of Intruder Alarm on the stack, letting you make gobs of mana with the Priest and ultimately return the Deranged Hermit so you can rinse and repeat. You can return up to four of your opponent's permanents to his or her hand each cycle, and you will have as many squirrels as you want when you get tired of tapping and untapping your creatures.

Yes, there are better Elf decks that just win with Overrun or Biorhythm in Extended, but there are none that are more fun. Naturalize and Steely Resolve are both must-haves for your sideboard, but after that, it's up to you.

Of all the tribes, none seems less fearsome than Birds. It's hard to get scared about a handful of 1/1 fliers. How about a handful of 11/11 fliers then?



✦ ROB ALEXANDER

Birds
- Standard - November 2002 -

1	Commander Eesha
4	Gustcloak Harrier
4	Mystic Familiar
4	Soulcatcher
4	Suntail Hawk
2	Airborne Aid
4	Battle Screech
4	Memory Lapse
4	Prismatic Strands
3	Quiet Speculation
3	Soulcatcher's Aerie
2	Seaside Haven
4	Flooded Strand
6	Island
11	Plains

BIRDS

There was some early talk about a Bird deck similar to this one during the *Odyssey* Block Constructed Pro Tour Qualifier season that just passed. The team Punisher deck toward the end of the season took good advantage of Battle Screech/Quiet Speculation/Prismatic Strands, but it was definitely not a Bird deck. This deck gets some very powerful card drawing by focusing on Birds.

The central card in this deck is Soulcatcher's Aerie. Whenever your opponent kills one of your Birds, all of your remaining and subsequent Birds will get bigger. With Seaside Haven and the Aerie in play, you can draw a card by sacrificing a Bird with the bonus of making all your other Birds bigger. I'm not a big proponent of blocking, but it's a viable strategy with this deck. With the Aerie in play, your opponent will have to think twice before attacking into your Battle Screech tokens. (Yes, token creatures do hit the graveyard, so they will activate the Aerie!) Even if your opponent can Wrath away your creatures, an Aerie in play will make your next flock of Birds monstrous. If you are not a fan of the Aerie, Divine Sacrament, Glorious Anthem, or Shared Triumph are suitable replacements.

Ideally, this deck drops a Suntail Hawk on the first turn and follows it up with Quiet Speculation on the second turn, putting three Battle Screeches in the graveyard. Pretty soon, it drops a swarm of Birds into play. Quiet Speculation for Prismatic Strands should always buy you enough time to ignore your opponent's ground forces and fly over for the win. Airborne Aid will help you find a timely Memory Lapse to keep the beatdown coming. What to sideboard? Disenchant is always a winner in a white deck, but beyond that it is up to you.

Sometimes tribes have to come together and Zombies and Clerics go together like . . .

Well, they go together like a fun combo deck in OBC—no, not that OBC! Before you know it, *Onslaught* Block Constructed will be upon us, and tribe decks will be a huge part of that environment. The combo revolves around Rotlung Reanimator, Nantuko Husk, and Artificial Evolution. I've listed the result of my early attempts at building the deck.

Zombies & Clerics
- Onslaught Block Constructed -

4	Disciple of Malice
4	Doomed Necromancer
4	Nantuko Husk
4	Rotlung Reanimator
4	Undead Gladiator
4	Artificial Evolution
4	Choking Tethers
4	Dirge of the Dead
4	Smother
4	Barren Moor
6	Island
4	Polluted Delta
10	Swamp

ZOMBIES & CLERICS

The combo involves having a Nantuko Husk in play along with Rotlung Reanimator and any other Zombie. Artificial Evolution allows you to permanently change the text of Rotlung Reanimator from "Any time Rotlung Reanimator or another Cleric . . ." to "Any time Rotlung Reanimator or another *Zombie* . . . ." You can now sacrifice a Zombie to the Husk, giving it +2/+2 and creating a 2/2 Zombie token, which you sacrifice to Nantuko Husk, giving it +2/+2 and creating another 2/2 Zombie token, and so on.

You now have an arbitrarily large Nantuko Husk. If only it was unblockable . . . That's where the cycling cards come in. Early in the game, Choking Tethers and Dirge of the Dead can be cycled to help you find your combo pieces and smooth out your mana. In the late game, they will give you a huge, unblockable Nantuko Husk. Smother also helps in the early game, removing early drops, and clears the way past a chump blocker during your endgame.

Doomed Necromancer is another Cleric. Should you lose a combo creature in the early game, you can use the Necromancer to return it to play. Doomed Necromancer makes the perfect chump blocker. After blocking you can sacrifice it to return a creature to play—ideally another Doomed Necromancer—keeping your opponent's best ground-pounder at bay. If you have a Rotlung Reanimator in play, you will also get a 2/2 Zombie token.

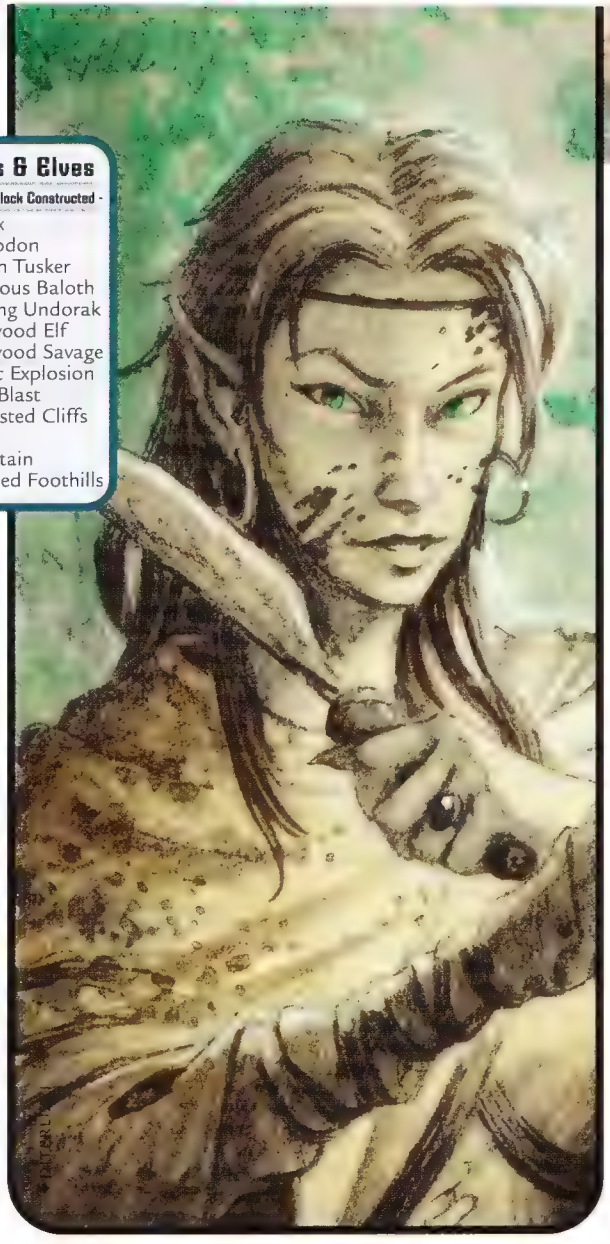
It's important to note that if you have two Reanimators in play, you will get two Zombie tokens when a Cleric goes to the graveyard. If you get Necromancer recursion going, that can add up to an overwhelming army of the undead pretty quickly.

Disciple of Malice and Undead Gladiator are in the deck largely to cycle to your combo. The Disciple can also serve as a chump blocker or Zombie fodder, but the Undead Gladiator really shines. Like any true Zombie, the Gladiator keeps coming back—he is recursive cycling or chump blocking depending on the game situation. There are 20 cycling cards in this deck, and the Gladiators can be cycled multiple times, so you should be able to find the pieces you need to win.

Cover of Darkness leaps to mind as a possible sideboard card, and Peer Pressure might be reasonable if you expect to play the Zombie mirror match. Entrails Feaster is a good answer for all of the Oversold Cemetery decks that will be running around, and Swat could be useful—it will depend on the environment.

Another deck that is sure to develop during the Block Constructed season is a Beast deck that splashes Elves for Wirewood Elf and Wirewood Savage.

✦ CARL CRITCHLOW



BEASTS & ELVES

Beasts & Elves
- Onslaught Block Constructed -

4	Avarax
4	Hystrodon
4	Krosan Tusker
4	Ravenous Baloth
4	Snarling Undorak
4	Wirewood Elf
4	Wirewood Savage
4	Erratic Explosion
4	Solar Blast
3	Contested Cliffs
12	Forest
5	Mountain
4	Wooded Foothills

This deck is a pretty straightforward green-red build with mana acceleration and fatties. What is unusual about the deck in comparison to traditional green-red decks is the card drawing ability of Wirewood Savage. I think the Savage is my most common first pick in *Onslaught* Draft, and it should be equally powerful in Constructed. Your creatures are going to be bigger than what most of your opponents will be bringing to the table; getting to draw at least one card when each of those creatures comes into play seems downright unfair.

Even without the mana acceleration of Wirewood Elf, you can start drawing extra cards on the fourth turn with *eight* Beasts that can be played face up on turn four. Plus, you have the green Ophidian attacking on the fourth turn for another card. While Hystrodon costs five to play normally, it can be turned face-up for 1 🌳🌳.

Snarling Undorak and Ravenous Baloth are next up on the mana curve, and both cards give you quite a bit for four mana. While the Undorak is only a 3/3, he makes all your Beasts harder to deal with when you have untapped mana. What can you say about the Baloth? How about "game over" for beatdown decks? Not only does he have a massive 4/4 body that is difficult for Goblins and their tiny ilk to navigate around, but he also turns all of your Beasts into Spike Feeders.

This deck also generates card advantage with another Beast that doesn't need Elves to draw cards. Avarax is a 3/3 Beast with haste that allows you to search for another copy of Avarax when it comes into play. If you have a Wirewood Savage or two in play this will get out of hand for your opponent very quickly.

Why not add more card drawing Beasts into this deck? Krosan Tusker—or the green Fact or Fiction, as Mike Flores likes to call him—fixes your mana and draws you a card when you cycle him. But sometimes a 6/5 creature is just a 6/5 creature, and with all the card drawing in this deck, you will end up playing him against your gape-mouthed opponent.

If all of this card drawing, mana accelerating, hasty action weren't enough, you also get to punish your opponent with the land in the deck. Of all the tribe-based lands, I think Contested Cliffs may be the most powerful. Similar to the old promotional card Arena, Contested Cliffs can be used during combat before or after damage is on the stack. On offense, it makes gang blocks by your opponent more precarious, and on defense it allows your Beasts to "block" two creatures. It can also be used at the end of your opponent's turn to remove blockers that stand in the way of a victorious Alpha Strike during your next turn.

Your burn spells cost three and four mana but should be capable of killing almost anything your opponent throws in your way. I considered Shock but thought that it would make Erratic Explosion that much weaker. Erratic Explosion will never do less than 2 points in this deck and will most often deal 4 or more. Solar Blast can also cycle to kill an early 1-toughness creature and comes online at full strength as early as turn three thanks to Wirewood Elf.

Sideboards should obviously contain Naturalize and Steely Resolve. If you're worried about getting run over by fast non-Wizard decks, you should consider Thoughtbound Primoc as an early creature out of the board. Once again, cycling Slice and Dice should spell doom for any deck that relies on aggressive smaller creatures like Goblins, Elves, Birds, or Wizards.

How about a Soldier deck with no creatures in the main deck? One of the most hyped (over-hyped, some would say) decks discussed in the days leading up to *Onslaught*-legal Standard was the updated "Counter-Post" deck. I have tweaked it a little to include a slot for Living Wish and a small buffet of Soldiers for you to get from your sideboard.

SOLDIERS

Soldiers
- Standard - November 2002 -

4	Circular Logic
4	Complicate
4	Compulsion
4	Counterspell
3	Living Wish
4	Mirari's Wake
4	Mobilization
3	Moment's Peace
4	Wrath of God
4	Forest
12	Island
4	Krosan Verge
6	Plains

sideboard

4	Aven Cloudchaser
1	Aven Smokeweaver
1	Catapult Master
1	Catapult Squad
1	Major Teroh
4	Possessed Aven
1	Riftstone Portal
1	Staunch Defenders
1	Treetop Sentinel

Wrath of God clears the board, and then you overwhelm your opponent with Mobilization—pretty simple. If you need something more, you can get it with Living Wish. I've only included Soldiers and a Riftstone Portal in the sideboard, but you can tinker with it as you see fit.

If you decide to explore the tribal themes of *Onslaught* in Constructed decks, you'll find that this is just a small sample of the options available to you. I didn't even build an Illusions deck with the Mistform creatures. Hmmm . . . Mistform creatures and Peer Pressure . . .

I gotta go—I have another deck to test.

States Metagame

Astral Slide and Blue-Green Dominate

by Ben Rubin

This year's State Championships have come and gone, and the various decks that made Top 8's offer a lot of food for thought. However, we must remember that States aren't pro events, and while it's fair to assume that players played what they thought were the best decks, it's not likely that they got the end of the metagame. In short, the results from States are an indicator, perhaps telling us what is best among the most popular decks, but they aren't the sort of results that should scare you if your favorite deck is not mentioned.

The dominator seems to be blue-green madness. There are some variations possible, including the use of Opposition and Squirrel Nest to add another dimension to the deck. However, I think that keeping the deck focused on what it does best -producing aggressive creatures hyper-efficiently--is the best plan. That leaves the deck looking something like the one I've listed.

Typical sideboard cards include Naturalize, Ray of Revelation, Phantom Centaur, Compost, Squirrel Nest, Upheaval, Sylvan Safekeeper, Moment's Peace, Envelop, Counterspell, and others. In general, the idea is to have sideboard access to disruptive cards, such as enchantment removal and countermagic, and protection for creatures—Squirrel Nest (against Chainer's Edict, as a reusable man-maker), Sylvan Safekeeper, and Compost (which certainly discourages using black removal). Centaurs seem decent in every matchup (and I saw them in just about every blue-green sideboard), but they don't fit the flow of the deck and don't seem outstanding in any matchup, so it's not clear where they fit into the plan. The best commonly used card for the mirror match appears to be Moment's Peace, but many blue-green designs seemed mostly to neglect that matchup. Based on the success of blue-green, I think that Moment's Peace and other cards geared towards winning the mirror will become more widely played in these sideboards.

Another deck that I bet was very common, but not too successful, is "Sligh", which should look something like what I've listed. It's due to both its ease to play and understand and its low cost to put together that made Sligh a frequently played deck. Unfortunately, not only does blue-green pose a lot of problems for this deck (fast and fat creatures), but the other decks weren't ignorant of the possibility of Goblins showing up. The presence of Teroh's Faithful, of all cards, certainly could not have made red players happy. I did, however, see some neat stuff in the sideboards of these decks. Many players used sac lands in their main decks to fuel Grim Lavamancer and to allow them to sideboard in Fledgling Dragon as an alternate strategy against decks packing life gain and/or answers to small creatures. Threaten is also a neat option against creatures like Roar of the Wurm and Phantom Centaur. Still, despite its numbers, this deck did not exactly prevail.

Black-Blue Madness
Standard - November 2002

3	Aquamoeba
3	Arrogant Wurm
4	Basking Rootwalla
4	Merfolk Looter
4	Wild Mongrel
3	Wonder
4	Æther Burst
4	Careful Study
4	Circular Logic
2	Deep Analysis
3	Roar of the Wurm
2	City of Brass
9	Forest
11	Island

Two varieties of Mirari's Wake decks saw a significant amount of play. The more popular version was based on the deck played by Jens Thorén at the Invitational. This design kills with an Elephant Ambush out of the sideboard (via Cunning Wish). What's curious about the deck is the clunkiness of it. The only turn two play is Memory Lapse, then Circular Logic and Cunning Wish at three mana. It seems like this deck doesn't really get into the game until turn four, when it can play Wrath of God. Still, some people succeeded with this design, so it probably has some merit.

Sligh
Standard - November 2002

4	Blistering Firecat
4	Goblin Piledriver
4	Goblin Sledder
4	Grim Lavamancer
4	Raging Goblin
4	Sparksmith
4	Firebolt
4	Reckless Charge
4	Shock
4	Volcanic Hammer
4	Bloodstained Mire
1	Goblin Burrows
11	Mountain
4	Wooded Foothills

The Mirari's Wake deck that makes more sense to me was piloted by Brian Kibler at the last Invitational. Burning Wish gives access to various types of creature removal, permanent removal, and even combo and recursive elements. This deck is quite ambitious, setting out to get a Mirari's Wake into play as quickly as possible and use the mana to draw lots of cards, finding the cards to either decimate the opponent's position or "go off" by taking lots of turns, putting lots of lands in play, and playing Crash of Wurms or Firecat Blitz (from the sideboard) to kill. This is the sort of deck you would see much more of at a Pro Tour, where the majority of players would feel confident trying to pilot a deck this complex. My opinion is that even though these builds didn't exactly dominate at States, if you have game, you should give decks like this one a shot.

Speaking of combo decks, another deck that interests me is the cycling deck. Living Wish gives this deck amazing flexibility, allowing Cartographer, Auramancer,

Flying
Whenever Exalted Angel deals damage, you gain that much life.
Morph 2
Protection from blue
Whenever Goblin Piledriver attacks, it gets +2/+0 until end of turn for each other attacking Goblin.
Legendary Artifact

Burning Wish Wake
Standard - November 2002

4	Krosan Tusker
4	Burning Wish
3	Compulsion
1	Crash of Wurms
3	Deep Analysis
2	Memory Lapse
4	Mirari's Wake
3	Moment's Peace
3	Quiet Speculation
4	Rampant Growth
1	Time Stretch
3	Wrath of God
1	Flooded Strand
7	Forest
5	Island
4	Krosan Verge
1	Mountain
4	Plains
3	Windswept Heath

Cycling
Standard - November 2002

3	Cartographer
2	Exalted Angel
4	Krosan Tusker
2	Teroh's Faithful
4	Astral Slide
4	Lightning Rift
4	Living Wish
3	Renewed Faith
4	Slice and Dice
4	Wrath of God
4	Brushland
1	Forest
4	Forgotten Cave
3	Karplusan Forest
3	Mountain
3	Plains
4	Secluded Steppe
4	Tranquil Thicket

Cunning Wish Wake
Standard - November 2002

3	Circular Logic
3	Compulsion
4	Cunning Wish
4	Deep Analysis
4	Memory Lapse
2	Mirari
4	Mirari's Wake
3	Moment's Peace
4	Wrath of God
2	Adarkar Wastes
4	Forest
9	Island
4	Krosan Verge
4	Lonely Sandbar
4	Plains
2	Windswept Heath

to its complexity. Still, it's got a nice feel to it and is worth considering for this environment. This deck also appears fairly commonly without the green, but I think the color addition is a good one.

Monoblack control also saw some play, but it's really not a very interesting or proactive deck, so I'm going to just assume that you know what I'm talking about (or will look it up on the web) and move on.

Now, what I'd like to talk about are the "good stuff" creature decks. These decks include green, usually either mana creatures or the super efficient Wild Mongrel and Call of the Herd (or both), and start an offense that intends to win through overpowering the opponent with good creatures. If you scour the States lists, you'll find green-blue-black variants, red-green variants, and green-white variants. These might seem like extremely different decks, what with the wide variety of creatures, removal spells, and disruption spells that each implements. But I believe them to be of the same family; that is, each is literally attempting to race to win with creatures before the opponent can set up. If your deck is based on creatures, you can't do a whole lot on the defensive against most decks. The question, of course, is which of these strategies is best? And is any of them better than blue-green? Rather than comparing a bunch of lists, I think it will be helpful to break down the various functions of an aggressive creature deck, so you can begin to evaluate where your deck (or any deck you are analyzing) is strong and weak.

First of all, is it reliable? Is this the kind of deck that just can't win if your Bird of Paradise dies? Do you rely heavily on a madness outlet? If so, play a lot of them! You might compare Sligh to the Fires of Yavimaya decks of old. At their cores, they each desire to do the same thing: attack and kill you before you can get your game going. But Sligh has great redundancy and relatively modest aims. It has lots of cheap creatures, lots of lands that produce red mana, and lots of burn spells. It plans to draw a little bit of each of these components, come out gunning, and hope it's enough. Fires players, on the other hand, really wanted a mana creature, a Fires, a removal spell for a troublesome creature, enough lands to get to five mana, and all fatties from there on out–not too reliable. But if you get enough power in return, it can be worth it, which leads us to . . .

Power. When you get your good draw, what kinds of options do you leave your opponent? If it's the kind of deal where your opponent has no chance with a significant percentage of your draws, then it's worth risking a little consistency. It's important to realize how often your good draw can be beaten. Maybe your good draw isn't winning enough and you need to be more ambitious (and risk some consistency), or maybe your good draws are doing well but you don't get enough of them, and you need to swallow your pride a little and look for a more solid design.

Finally, flexibility. Do you have the defensive tools to come back if your opponent goes first and gets an explosive draw? Are there troublesome spells or enchantments that you can't play around, can't beat? More pressingly, is there a common creature, like Psychatog or a Roar token, that you can't get past? If you are the kind of player that feels superior to the competition, then flexibility is key. You want to have as many chances as possible to outplay your opponent. Even if you are spreading yourself thin, having some remedial tools (even if those tools wouldn't be enough against a skilled player) can do a lot more than you'd think if you use them wisely against an inexperienced opponent. For example, a Mirari's Wake player might not know when to play his Wrath of God, and having a card like Call of the Herd or Beast Attack that is resistant to creature removal might do extra damage against an opponent not used to playing against your extra resilience. Crucially, if you want to dominate the competition, you need to have a chance in as many games as possible.

So, reliability, power, flexibility—which creature deck demonstrates these the best? Figure it out, and when you think you're sure, let me know! Until then, enjoy Standard.

Cloudchaser Eagle, Teroh's Faithful, and even cards like Pardic Arsonist and Exalted Angel to come out of the sideboard if needed. It can even be used to get a land. The rest of what this deck does is pretty obvious—cycle and profit from it! Unfortunately, I think this deck also didn't get the representation it deserved at States due

Pro Tour–Houston Top 8 Decks

An In-depth Analysis of Extended

by Ben Bleiweiss

Pro Tour–Houston brought a number of fresh decks to the Extended environment. Many felt coming into the tournament that combo decks would rule, and that games would not last past turn three or four. Others claimed that control was completely dead, to the degree that a turn two Counterspell was too slow to matter. People braced for the worst, fearing a new pool of cards which would come dead on arrival.

The naysayers and pessimists couldn't have been more wrong.

Literally dozens of viable decks made the cut to the second day of competition, with an absolutely astounding seven different decktypes advancing to the Top 8. I'll say that again, because it's that impressive: of the eight decks to play on Sunday, seven of them were different archetypes.

What set these particular eight decks ahead of the rest of the field? Before we examine the specific builds for each deck, let's put the entire tournament in perspective. Most players who tested heavily for the environment expected blue-black "Reanimator", "The Rock", Psychatog, Aluren, "Sligh", "Suicide Black", and Tinker to be the most heavily played decks coming into Houston. The players who finished the highest realized that in order to do well, they'd need to tweak their main decks and sideboards towards those seven decks.

Quickly in testing, many players realized that Tinker didn't hold up at all. Since this was the only deck which called for mass artifact hate, most of the Top 8 rightfully ignored the deck entirely. A lot of decks that didn't fare as well packed multiple artifact kill cards, and that alone cost them crucial slots in a field so diverse that every one of the fifteen sideboard cards took on immense importance.

The Top 8 decks consisted of "Turbo Oath", monoblack Reanimator, blue-black Reanimator, Psychatog, Aluren, two versions of The Rock, and a completely rogue deck dubbed "Angry Hermit, Part Two" (or "Angry Ghoul"). Let's take a look at each of the Top 8 decks in depth.

Turbo Oath—Justin Gary

Justin Gary

- Turbo Oath -

2	Cognivore
4	Accumulated Knowledge
4	Brainstorm
4	Counterspell
3	Fact or Fiction
1	Foil
2	Forbid
3	Force Spike
2	Intuition
1	Krosan Reclamation
2	Living Wish
1	Mana Leak
4	Oath of Druids
3	Pernicious Deed
2	Forest
7	Island
4	Polluted Delta
1	Swamp
4	Treetop Village
2	Underground River
4	Yavimaya Coast

sideboard

2	Dust Bowl
3	Engineered Plague
2	Gilded Drake
2	Masticore
2	Naturalize
2	Palinchron
2	Powder Keg

There were two versions of Turbo Oath running the field. One took a traditional approach to the build, combining life-gain creatures (in most cases, Phantom Nishoba) with recursion (Battlefield Scrounger, filling in for the departed Gaea's Blessing). These Turbo Oath decks didn't fare too well in Houston. This was due mainly to their lack of speed. While Phantom Nishoba might kill an opponent in three turns, it has no evasion to stand up to one of the large creatures that Reanimator can bring out as early as turn two. Also, a Battlefield Scrounger could be Oathed out in the early game instead of the Nishoba. This spelled instant doom against decks which packed Visara the Dreadful, Psychatog (backed with Wonder), and Cognivore.

Ah, Cognivore. At the Masters Series event at Pro Tour–Nice just six months earlier, several Japanese players showed up with a deck built around Oath of Druids that combined the powers of both the Oath deck and the popular "Trix" deck. Instead of packing the traditional Morphling/Spike Feeder/Spike Weaver trio, their builds contained Cognivore, the eight-mana flyer with power and toughness equal to the total number of instants in all graveyards. Before Cognivore, the deck struggled to kill people quickly, as Morphling couldn't hit for more than five a turn. After Cognivore, Turbo Oath could tutor up a tremendous flyer which would often end the game in just two short attacks.

Justin Gary understood the power of Cognivore. Many people wrote the deck off for dead after the exit of Gaea's Blessing, since it ran a real danger of decking itself if it didn't run any kind of recursion. However, would it matter if you brought yourself to a scant few cards in left in your library if you also had an 18/18 flyer on the board at no cost?

The first detail you'll notice about the deck is the number of instants it runs. Between countermagic (Force Spike, Counterspell, Forbid, and Mana Leak), card drawing (Brainstorm, Accumulated Knowledge, and Fact or Fiction), tutoring (Intuition), and recursion (a single Krosan Reclamation), the deck packs no less than 25 instants pre-sideboard. This puts an average Cognivore in the 12/12 range as early as turn three.

The flying Lhurgoyf isn't the only offensive weapon in the deck. Four Treetop Villages serve as both mana sources and beatdown machines. At Pro Tour–Houston, very few players ran any sort of land destruction. Wasteland virtually disappeared from the scene, and Dust Bowl didn't often appear in multiples. This gave the 3/3 trampling man-land free reign over the board in many cases.

In addition, Gary's build contains two copies of Living Wish. This powerful tutor enables him to access eight of his sideboard cards mid-game. Dust Bowl can be pulled from the sideboard to take out pesky nonbasic lands, most notably the aforementioned Village. Gilded Drake, the metagame card of choice, allows Oath to steal reanimated monsters before they can do much damage. Masticore fends off the creature hordes generated by Suicide Black and Sligh and also survives Pernicious Deed. Fetching Palinchron allows Oath to play a game of aggro-control, as it can drop down the 4/5 flyer and keep all its mana open for countermagic.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about Gary's build is his choice of counterspells. The deck packs Force Spike as an answer to early questions from combo and aggro decks, with Counterspell and Mana Leak filling the more traditional two-mana slot. However, many players expected control to be dead with the disappearance of Force of Will. Gary added a single Foil to his deck. Most opponents wouldn't consider having

Monoblack Reanimator—Rob Dougherty

Most players opted for a black-blue build of the Reanimator deck. Not Rob! His monoblack version packs a number of innovations which push it ahead of the field. Just a year before, the "Benzo" deck played by Dougherty and his teammates Dave Humphries and Darwin Kastle took the monoblack Reanimator theme and used it to dominate the Extended-format Pro Tour-New Orleans.

Rob Dougherty
- Monoblack Reanimator -

2	Faceless Butcher
1	Nether Spirit
1	Petradon
1	Phantom Nishoba
1	Stronghold Taskmaster
1	Symbiotic Wurm
1	Verdant Force
1	Visara the Dreadful
4	Duress
4	Cabal Therapy
4	Entomb
4	Exhume
4	Last Rites
4	Reanimate
4	Vampiric Tutor
4	City of Traitors
19	Swamp

sideboard

4	Diabolic Edict
2	Engineered Plague
2	Faceless Butcher
2	Planar Void
3	Phyrexian Negator
1	Urborg Shambler
1	Woodripper

Last year's build put emphasis on card advantage. It used Zombie Infestation to put large creatures in the graveyard while making 2/2 creatures and utilized Buried Alive to get Krovikan Horror and Squee, Goblin Nabob. This year's version couldn't be more different. Although the base components of the Reanimator deck (Entomb, Reanimate, and Exhume) are all there, the rest of the deck has been retooled.

For instance, look at the creature base. Petradon, Symbiotic Wurm, Visara the Dreadful, Phantom Nishoba, Stronghold Taskmaster, and Verdant Force compose the most often reanimated part of the deck, while Faceless Butcher and Nether Spirit play utility roles. Each of these different creatures serves a purpose against a different expected deck in the field.

The deck also packs a ton of discard effects. Duress, Cabal Therapy, and Last Rites take crucial cards out of an opponent's hand, allowing Reanimator to go off without trouble. City of Traitors accelerates the deck towards a second turn Last Rites. The Rites can often take out an entire hand, while allowing Dougherty to drop any large creatures he's already drawn into his own graveyard for later use.

Taking a look at the sideboard of this deck, you'll notice the strange choice of Planar Void. This is part of the "B" plan for the deck: add in the Diabolic Edicts, Phyrexian Negators, Planar Voids, and Faceless Butchers, and then go beatdown. Suddenly, instead of being a Reanimator deck vulnerable to anti-reanimation, the deck becomes a quick offensive threat, capable of stripping away an opponent's hand with discard before dropping a quick Negator backed by Faceless Butchers.

their spells countered with the Oath player tapped out, so the single Foil can have a devastating effect even while losing three for one card economy. Once an opponent sees a Foil, he or she has to play the rest of the game as though any spell played might be countered for "free", which alters the pace of the game considerably. Forbid, for its part, might be too slow against a deck aimed at killing on turn three or four, but trumps other decks which hope to develop in the late game, such as The Rock or the mirror match. Suddenly, extra copies of Oath and lands in hand become fodder for a recurring Counterspell.

Another interesting feature of Gary's build is the inclusion of Pernicious Deed and Engineered Plague. In an otherwise blue-green deck, no less than 7 of the 24 mana sources included are dedicated to these 6 cards. Four lands, the Polluted Deltas, can be used to fetch the deck's single swamp while thinning the deck. The swamp, or one of two Underground Rivers, can be used to play Pernicious Deed. A disproportionate number of decks in Houston ran significant amounts of discard spells. Pernicious Deed can often come straight off the top of the deck to win an otherwise hopeless game, rendering a discard strategy almost useless. It also gives a main-deck answer to Treetop Villages and can keep combo decks from getting their combos going.

Verdant Force
Summon Elemental
During each player's upkeep, put a Saproling token into play. Treat this token as a 1/1 green creature.
Burl, scurf, and bower
Birth fern and flower.
7/7

The most traditional of Reanimator creatures, this 7/7 green monster creates its own army of Saprolings, making it extra-resilient against Diabolic Edict.

Trample
Phantom Nishoba comes into play with seven +1/+1 counters on it.
Whenever Phantom Nishoba deals damage, you gain that much life
If damage would be dealt to Phantom Nishoba, prevent that damage. Remove a +1/+1 counter from Phantom Nishoba
0/0

For use against decks which can't outright kill a creature, most notably Sligh. Red decks can't stop a 7/7 Spirit Linked trampler that can prevent damage to itself.

When Petradon comes into play, remove two target lands from the game.
When Petradon leaves play, return the removed cards to play under their owners' control
Petradon gets +1/+0 until end of turn.
7/6

Used to shut off slower decks. This 5/6 Nightmare Beast can set back decks like The Rock and Aluren a crucial two turns, buying Dougherty time to win the game.

When Symbiotic Wurm is put into a graveyard from play, put seven 1/1 green Insect creature tokens into play.
The insects keep the wurm's hide free from parasites. In return, the wurm doesn't eat the insects.
7/7

Often used as a back-up for Verdant Force, this huge creature serves as a second Edict-proof monster.

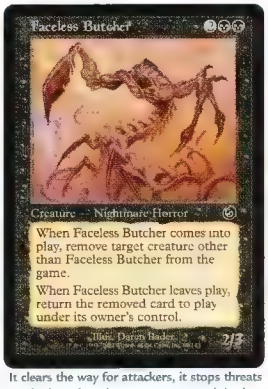
This Pit Fighter Legend gives the deck a way to deal with virtually every other creature in the environment. She stops any creature in Reanimator, Oath, and Psychatog.

Stronghold Taskmaster
Summon Minion
All other black creatures get -1/-1.
"With the completion of each joyous task, we are closer to Yawgmoth's divine vision."
Stronghold architect, journal
4/3

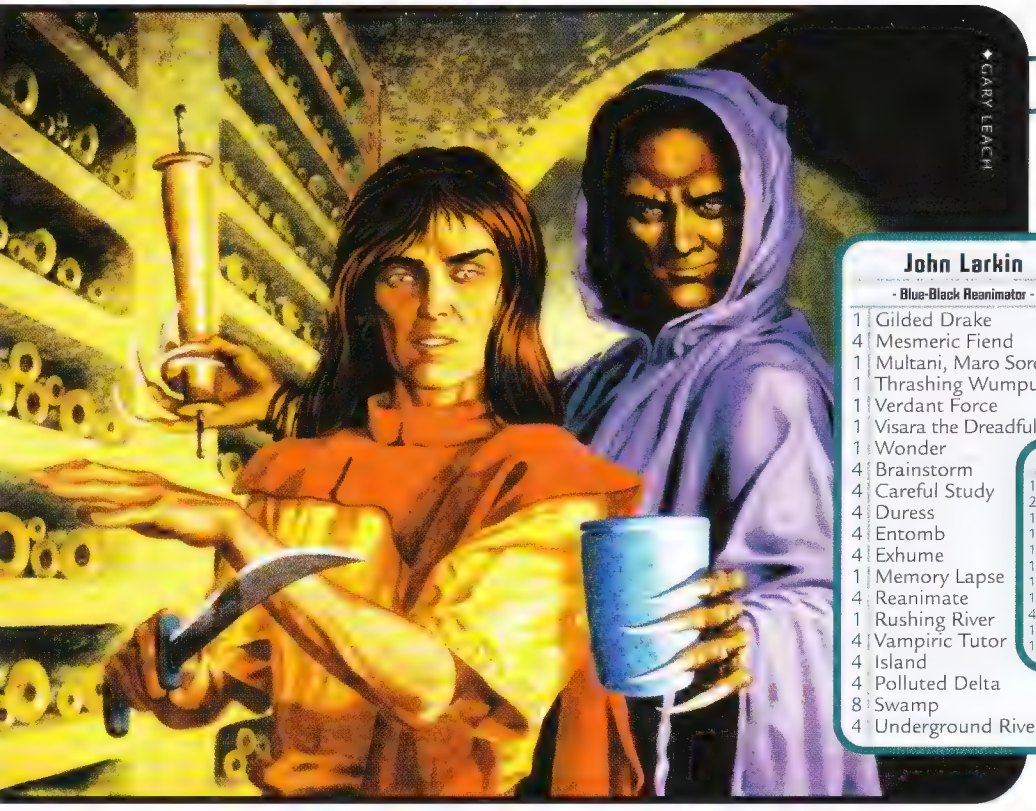
Strong tech against Aluren that serves double duty against Suicide Black. Aluren decks use Cavern Harpy to win, but the Taskmaster shuts it down.

Nether Spirit
Creature — Spirit
At the beginning of your upkeep, if Nether Spirit is the only creature card in your graveyard, you may return Nether Spirit to play.
It roams in the words of the living and the dead but belongs to neither
2/2

Entomb allows this pesky 2/2 to come into play should no reanimation be readily at hand.


Faceless Butcher
Creature — Nightmare Horror
When Faceless Butcher comes into play, remove target creature other than Faceless Butcher from the game.
When Faceless Butcher leaves play, return the removed card to play under its owner's control.
2/3

It clears the way for attackers, it stops threats on the board, and serves as great tech in the mirror match, allowing Dougherty to remove any creature that his opponent steals.



Blue-Black Reanimator—John Larkin

Larkin piloted the most heavily metagamed-against deck in the tournament to a respectable fourth place finish. Virtually everyone in the tournament prepared against this version of the deck, using cards ranging from Gilded Drake to Tariff in order to put an end to the reanimation plan. Many regarded blue-black Reanimator as the best deck in the tournament, but as one player put it, "There was so much hate in the environment that this was the first Pro Tour where it was wrong to play the best deck available." So how did Larkin do so well?

Compare his creature base to that of Dougherty's monoblack build. Larkin adds in a main deck Gilded Drake, which he can easily play on the second turn. His Reanimator creatures include Multani, Maro Sorcerer and Thrashing Wumpus. The former can't easily be dealt with by traditional effects, since you can't target it with the Drake, Faceless Butcher, or spot removal. The latter allows Larkin to clear the board of smaller creatures, and kill almost all of the parts of the Aluren deck. Furthermore, he added four Mesmeric Fiends to the deck to compliment Duress. These 1/1's serve a second purpose of saving larger creatures from Diabolic Edict. Lastly, John runs a single copy of Wonder. This gives the evasionless Verdant Force and Multani a much needed way to get through to deal damage in a ground stall situation.

John uses Entomb and Careful Study to get creatures into his graveyard for reanimation. Blue also gives him access to Brainstorm, which can be used in combination with Vampiric Tutor and Entomb to shuffle creatures back into his library, when otherwise a creature like Verdant Force would be dead in hand. Memory Lapse and Rushing River serve much the same purpose in this deck that Foil served in Gary's deck—they are significantly game-altering effects which once seen, the opponent must play around. Memory Lapse shows countermagic in a deck which otherwise has none, while Rushing River clears the way for attackers, buys time on defense, and returns stolen creatures to their owner's hand.

John Larkin
- Blue-Black Reanimator -

1	Gilded Drake
4	Mesmeric Fiend
1	Multani, Maro Sorcerer
1	Thrashing Wumpus
1	Verdant Force
1	Visara the Dreadful
1	Wonder
4	Brainstorm
4	Careful Study
4	Duress
4	Entomb
4	Exhume
1	Memory Lapse
4	Reanimate
1	Rushing River
4	Vampiric Tutor
4	Island
4	Polluted Delta
8	Swamp
4	Underground River

sideboard

1	Arcane Laboratory
2	Cabal Therapy
1	Coffin Purge
1	Gainsay
1	Gilded Drake
1	Llawan, Cephalid Empress
1	Massacre
1	Phantom Nishoba
4	Shadowmage Infiltrator
1	Stronghold Taskmaster
1	Volrath's Stronghold

The Rock—Kastle & Remie

Developed originally by Sol Malka, "The Rock and His Millions" used to revolve around Phyrexian Plaguelord (The Rock) and Deranged Hermit (His Millions). You'll notice the absence of both of these trademark creatures in Kastle's deck, which instead packs eight one-drop mana accelerators, four Treetop Villages, four Yavimaya Elders, and a pair of regenerating, color-changing Spiritmongers.

The top aggro-control deck of the environment, The Rock does it all. It plays offense with Spiritmonger and Treetop Villages; plays defense with Pernicious Deed, Diabolic Edict, and Chainer's Edict; and plays disruption in the form of Cabal Therapy and Duress. Vampiric Tutor helps the deck search out whatever answer it needs at any given time. This gives it game against every other deck in the field, as it has answers for each of the other tier one decks. Most considered The Rock the ideal deck to play going into this format, since it could always find an answer to whatever threat any opponent happened to throw out.

Where Kastle's version focuses heavily on disruption and discard, Jeroen Remie's build contains much more beatdown. Ditching the Diabolic Edicts and half the mana acceleration, Remie's version of The Rock adds Wall of Blossoms to halt decks like Sligh, adds in Spike Feeders for the same purpose, and plays a full four Spiritmongers in the main deck.

Both versions run Living Wish main deck, and for many of the same cards. Both versions can fetch Ravenous Baloth, Faceless Butcher, Genesis, and Stronghold Taskmaster at a whim. However, Kastle's sideboard contains Dust Bowl, Masticore, and Spiritmonger, while Remie's has Visara the Dreadful and Uktabi Orangutan. This clearly gives the edge to Kastle's build, since he can get Dust Bowl to deal with Treetop Village, and can more readily play his creatures. Uktabi Orangutan does little more than waste a valuable sideboard slot in Remie's build, and his deck contains only nine black mana-producing lands with which to play Visara (thirteen mana sources, including Birds of Paradise).

Darwin Kastle
- The Rock -

4	Birds of Paradise
4	Llanowar Elves
2	Spiritmonger
4	Yavimaya Elder
4	Cabal Therapy
1	Chainer's Edict
4	Diabolic Edict
4	Duress
1	Living Wish
1	Naturalize
4	Pernicious Deed
4	Vampiric Tutor
1	Dust Bowl
7	Forest
4	Llanowar Wastes
7	Swamp
4	Treetop Village

sideboard

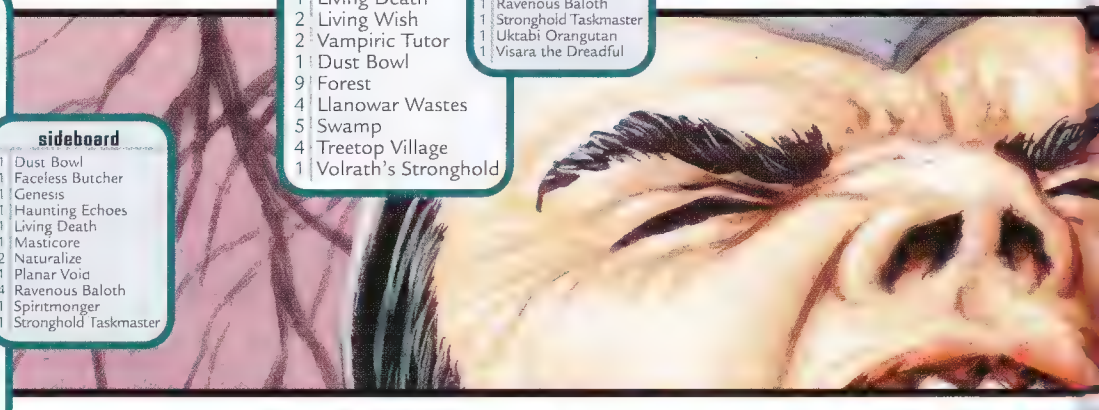
1	Dust Bowl
1	Faceless Butcher
1	Genesis
1	Haunting Echoes
1	Living Death
1	Masticore
2	Naturalize
1	Planar Void
4	Ravenous Baloth
1	Spiritmonger
1	Stronghold Taskmaster

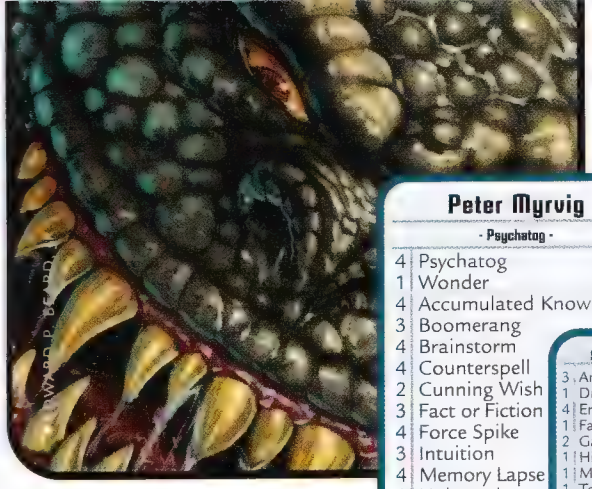
Jeroen Remie
- The Rock -

4	Birds of Paradise
4	Spike Feeder
4	Spiritmonger
3	Wall of Blossoms
4	Yavimaya Elder
3	Cabal Therapy
1	Chainer's Edict
4	Duress
4	Pernicious Deed
1	Living Death
2	Living Wish
2	Vampiric Tutor
1	Dust Bowl
9	Forest
4	Llanowar Wastes
5	Swamp
4	Treetop Village
1	Volrath's Stronghold

sideboard

2	Coffin Purge
1	Faceless Butcher
1	Genesis
4	Naturalize
3	Planar Void
1	Ravenous Baloth
1	Stronghold Taskmaster
1	Uktabi Orangutan
1	Visara the Dreadful





Peter Myrvig

- Psychatog -

4	Psychatog
1	Wonder
4	Accumulated Knowledge
3	Boomerang
4	Brainstorm
4	Counterspell
2	Cunning Wish
3	Fact or Fiction
4	Force Spike
3	Intuition
4	Memory Lapse
1	Upheaval
13	Island
4	Polluted Delta
2	Swamp
4	Underground River

sideboard

3	Annul
1	Diabolic Edict
4	Engineered Plague
1	Fact or Fiction
2	Gainsay
1	Hibernation
1	Misdirection
1	Teferi's Response
1	Turnabout

Psychatog—Peter Myrvig

A far cry from the Type 2 version of the deck, which packed Nightscape Familiar, Flametongue Kavu, and Repulse, the Extended version of Psychatog played by Myrvig plays almost like a combo deck. Twelve counterspells backed by Cunning Wish and Intuition give the deck tremendous stalling power until it can get out a Psychatog and win the game, often in one fell swoop. Card drawing, in the form of Accumulated Knowledge and Fact or Fiction, fills the graveyard and hand with cards, serving the double purpose of providing card advantage and food for Psychatog.

Many versions of the Psychatog deck played at Houston went straight for speed. They combined Gush and Fact or Fiction to give Psychatog a minimum +12/+12 on the fourth turn, allowing the grinning threat to come across for an early, lethal attack. Myrvig's version opts for less flash and more stability. Boomerang can thwart Reanimator and other Psychatog decks. Cunning Wish gets a bevy of sideboard options. Hibernation removes Verdant Force. Turnabout allows Myrvig to either stop an attack or tap down an opponent's mana so that he can play safely for the kill. Misdirection gives him access to a free counterspell in key situations, Gainsay gives him a cheap counter against other control decks, and Annul is good against Pernicious Deed, Powder Keg, and Masticore. Diabolic Edict out of the board deals with reanimated creatures, while Teferi's Response keeps the deck fresh against land destruction effects.

Mattias Jorstedt

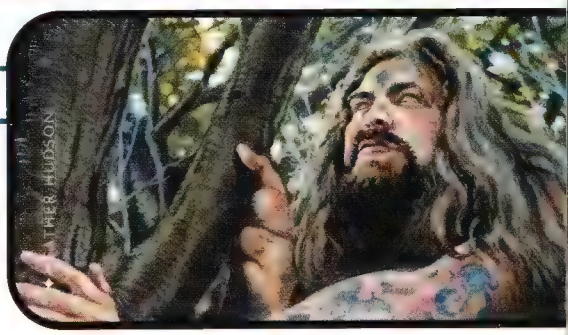
- Aluren -

4	Birds of Paradise
3	Cavern Harpy
2	Cloud of Faeries
3	Raven Familiar
1	Soul Warden
3	Wirewood Savage
4	Aluren
4	Brainstorm
4	Cabal Therapy
4	Intuition
4	Living Wish
1	Stroke of Genius
3	Island
3	City of Brass
3	Forest
1	Grand Coliseum
4	Hickory Woodlot
4	Polluted Delta
1	Swamp
4	Yavimaya Coast

sideboard

1	Academy Rector
1	Cavern Harpy
1	City of Brass
1	Gilded Drake
1	Maggot Carrier
1	Monk Realist
3	Orim's Chant
3	Pernicious Deed
1	Raven Familiar
1	Soul Warden
1	Uktabi Orangutan

Aluren—Mattias Jorstedt



Aluren used to be regarded as a tier two deck in Extended. Two cards have propelled it straight to respectability: Wirewood Savage and Living Wish. Jorstedt ran both of these cards in his top-finishing build of Aluren.

The deck works by playing a third (or fourth) turn Aluren. This allows Jorstedt to play Raven Familiar, Cavern Harpy, Wirewood Savage, Soul Warden, and Cloud of Faeries for free. Each of these creatures serves a different purpose. Wirewood Savage plus Cavern Harpy allows Jorstedt to draw unlimited cards, since the Cavern Harpy can gate itself infinitely for no cost. Soul Warden gives infinite life during this cycle, while Raven Familiar acts as a mini-Impulse, plus it can be gated with the Harpy to keep digging though the deck at the cost of one life (paid to return the Harpy to its owner's hand) a go.

This deck showcases the power of the *Judgment* wishes. Mattias plays three of each of the most important cards of the deck and has access to a two mana tutor to get Raven Familiar, Cavern Harpy, Gilded Drake, Monk Realist, Maggot Carrier, Soul Warden, or Academy Rector at will. Gilded Drake gives him game against Reanimator, Monk Realist is good in the mirror match, Maggot Carrier acts as a secondary kill method combined with Cavern Harpy and Soul Warden (gain infinite life with Cavern Harpy, then use it to bounce Maggot Carrier enough times to win), and Academy Rector is a way to get Aluren into play.

The deck wins in one of two ways. In the first, it uses Cloud of Faeries to untap two lands and then gates the flyer with Cavern Harpy. With the mana generated in each cycle of Faeries plus Harpy, the Aluren player can play Stroke of Genius, decking the opponent. The other method, outlined above, involves using the Harpy, Soul Warden, and Maggot Carrier to gain infinite life and deal infinite damage.

Angry Hermit, Part Two—Bob Maher

Easily the most successful rogue deck in the entire tournament, Angry Hermit, Part Two came as the brainchild of Japanese player Tsuyoshi Fujita (who did not attend Pro Tour–Houston) and the Dutch. Sold to Bob Maher the night before the tournament, the deck was piloted by The Great One to a Top 8 finish.

Also known as Angry Ghoul, this deck plays off of the strength of Hermit Druid. Though it runs many of the standard Reanimator cards (such as Reanimate, Entomb, and Exhume), it wins most often in spectacular fashion as early as turn two. Optimally, Angry Ghoul plays a first turn Hermit Druid using Mox Diamond and a land. Then, on the following turn, the deck activates the Druid. With only one basic land (a mountain) in the deck, most of the cards in the deck are usually milled straight to the graveyard. Then, Exhume or Reanimate is used to bring back Sutured Ghoul—which can be as large as 43/42—while leaving one Anger in the graveyard. Thanks to the single mountain and Anger, the second turn Ghoul may attack. A turn two 43/42 trampling creature with haste wins many games.

The deck utilizes a ton of synergy. Maher can mill his entire library and then flash back Cabal Therapy using his activated Hermit Druid to strip an opponent's hand of answers before returning a Ghoul to play. What if he gets the mountain relatively early in the mill? Then he can safely send the rest of his library to the graveyard, knowing that he can flash back his kill cards with Krosan Reclamation.

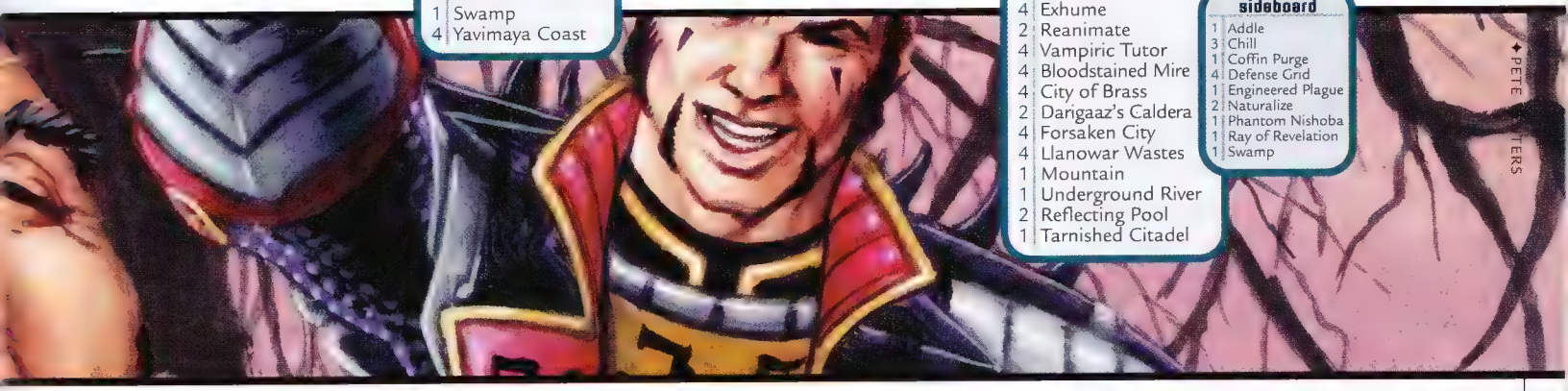
Bob Maher

- Angry Ghoul -

2	Anger
1	Avatar of Woe
4	Hermit Druid
1	Krosan Colossus
2	Sutured Ghoul
2	Verdant Force
2	Cabal Therapy
4	Duress
1	Krosan Reclamation
4	Mox Diamond
4	Entomb
4	Exhume
2	Reanimate
4	Vampiric Tutor
4	Bloodstained Mire
4	City of Brass
2	Darigaaz's Caldera
4	Forsaken City
4	Llanowar Wastes
1	Mountain
1	Underground River
2	Reflecting Pool
1	Tarnished Citadel

sideboard

1	Addle
3	Chill
1	Coffin Purge
4	Defense Grid
1	Engineered Plague
2	Naturalize
1	Phantom Nishoba
1	Ray of Revelation
1	Swamp



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October's card

Spike Feeder
Spike Feeder comes into play with two +1/+1 counters on it.
2, Remove a +1/+1 counter from Spike Feeder: Put a +1/+1 counter on target creature.
Remove a +1/+1 counter from Spike Feeder: You gain 2 life.
0/0

November's card

Creature — Goblin
Sacrifice Mogg Fanatic: Mogg Fanatic deals 1 damage to target creature or player.
"As if his chest had been a mortar, he... burnt his hot heart's shell upon it."
—Herman Melville, Moby Dick
1/1

December's card

First strike, protection from black
"When good men die their goodness does not perish, But lives though they are gone."
—Euripides, Termenidae, trans Morgan
2/2

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Seriebörsen - Gamla Tanneforsvägen 88, 58254 Linkoping
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Tv Spels butiken - Kyrkogatan 11, 54130 Skövde
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NT-Store Arvika - Storgatan 24, 67131 Arvika
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Frontline Games - Repslagaregatan 9 (Fredrik Håkansson), 30246 halmstad
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Prisfyndet - Kungsgatan 39, 753 21 Uppsala
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Scheibler's Spielkiste - Auf den Felsen 2, CH-4114 Hofstetten
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Spielstatt - Vordere Vorstadt 14, 5000 Aarau
41628220302 - spielstatt@bluewin.ch

Games Planet Gnomon - Weystrasse 22, 6006 Luzern
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Drachenascht - Rathausgasse 52, 3011 Bern
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Club Gildia Magov - Plehanovskaya st 92-A Hotel Metalist Building B app 303, Harkov - 572280519 - chikovany@3s.kharkov.ua

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Dragon - Gogolya str. 35-B, 99000 Sebastopol
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FIRST PICKS

In each issue of Sideboard *Magazine, we open up a booster and have two top players explain what card they would take as a first pick and why. In this installment, six-time Pro Tour winner Kai Budde and Houston Masters Series finalist Gary Wise analyze an* Onslaught *pack that contains many top picks, including Shock and Catapult Squad.*

Kai Budde's Pick

The first thing I do when I open my first pack in an *Onslaught* draft is go through it and look at the card with the gold expansion symbol. With the insane number of powerful rares in the set, it happens quite often that I don't look at the rest of the cards in the pack until after I've made my pick. That said, things don't work out that way in this case. Shared Triumph is a good card, but not as good as the rest of the pack. In fact, this is an excellent example of a pack you would want to get in a Sealed Deck tournament. There is no outstanding bomb, but the overall card quality is really high. Ascending Aven, Shock, Cruel Revival, Symbiotic Beast, and Catapult Squad are all easily first pick quality. I would be happy with either the Beast or the Aven, but in this format I value removal really highly. If you end up without cards that kill a 1/1 creature, at some point your opponent is going to tap 1 on his or her second turn and play Sparksmith, and you are going to scoop up your cards. That's why most people always want to draft red or black as one of their two colors in this format. I've won a number of games against a turn two Sparksmith that I could not deal with, but the number of games I've lost that way is probably five to ten times higher.

A case can be made for Catapult Squad, as it can be devastating in some matchups. If your opponent can't get rid of it and you have a total of four Soldiers in play, you have to try really hard to lose. But it is still a 1-toughness creature, and that means it most likely won't stick around for very long.

With the Squad and the other two creatures eliminated, Cruel Revival and Shock are the two options we have left. Those two are the best common removal spells in the set, followed by Solar Blast and Pacifism, but they serve very different purposes. Cruel Revival is "high end" removal. It kills creatures with "," or "the" in their names—Visara, Silvos, and company. If you run black as a main color, you should also have a Zombie to return from your graveyard 90 percent of the time you play the Revival, gaining card advantage while killing your opponent's best creature. The problem with the Revival is its mana cost. Five mana is a lot, especially in this format. In most games, you'll want to play a morph creature face-down on turn three and maybe turn four and then spend your mana on the following turns to pay their morph costs and play more guys. In this typical game of *Onslaught* Limited, a Shock is your best friend. If your opponent goes first, you can take back the tempo of the game by killing his or her turn three play and following it up with yours. All of a sudden, you're in the driver's seat. After your opponent plays another guy on his or her next turn, you can untap and attack with your face-down creature with mana available to turn it face up. Should it be blocked? Oh, Battering Craghorn. No blocks? Skirk Commando it is. This is exactly the position you want to be in and not get into. Shock ensures that you're not the guy who has to ask himself the question, "To block or not to block?"

Another good argument for Shock is its color. I can't think of any Limited format where red was as dominant as in *Onslaught*. There are four first-pick quality red commons in the set—Sparksmith, Shock, Solar Blast, and Skirk Commando—while Battering Craghorn, Pinpoint Avalanche, Erratic Explosion, Charging Slateback, Lavamancer's Skill, Goblin Sledder, and Goblin Taskmaster usually all make my main deck with no questions asked. That makes eleven good commons with some more playable ones like Wave of Indifference, Lay Waste, and Nosy Goblin also available. With so many decent cards, red easily supports four drafters at a table, sometimes even five, and if you're one of only three drafting this color, your deck should be nothing short of amazing.

The conclusion is that even if you're not Dave Price and have never really liked red, you should still give it a try in *Onslaught* Limited. I'm confident that it won't disappoint you. And when I draft red, I want as many Shocks in my deck as possible. All that makes Shock my choice in this pack.

Have fun and until next time!

As Shared Triumph comes into play, choose a creature type.
Creatures of the chosen type get +1/+1
"Win together, die alone."
Symbiotic Beast
When Symbiotic Beast is put into a graveyard from play, put four 1/1 green Insect creature tokens into play.
The insects found a meal in the carrion of the beast's prey. The beast found a spiffy new hairstyle.
Shock deals 2 damage to target creature or player.
"I love lightning! It's my best invention since the rock."
—Toggo, goblin weaponsmith
Whenever Gustcloak Runner becomes blocked, you may untap it and remove it from combat.
Cabal spies trying to follow the Order's movements are constantly frustrated by tracks that stop dead.
Enchanted land is an island
"My vengeance will drown my enemies as my storms drown the desert."
—Ixidor, reality sculptor
Fallen Cleric
Creature — Zombie Cleric
Protection from Clerics
Morph 4 (You may play this face down as a 2/2 creature for 3. Turn it face up any time for its morph cost.)
The most terrifying zombies are those with just a hint of their old selves left.
Protection from black
Cycling 2 (2, Discard this card from your hand: Draw a card.)
Dread was as foreign to her as the landscape ahead.
Tap up to four target creatures.
Cycling 1 (1, Discard this card from your hand: Draw a card.)
When you cycle Choking Tethers, you may tap target creature.

Gary Wise's Pick

Tap two untapped Soldiers you control: Catapult Squad deals 2 damage to target attacking or blocking creature.
Together they could hit anything between the heavens and the horizon.

Flying
Ascending Aven may block only creatures with flying.
Morph 2 (You may play this face down as a 2/2 creature for 3. Turn it face up any time for its morph cost.)

Disciple of Malice
Creature — Cleric
Protection from white
Cycling 2 (2, Discard this card from your hand: Draw a card.)
The lantern he carried did not light his way—it signaled his approach.

Wirewood Pride
Instant
Target creature gets +X/+X until end of turn, where X is the number of Elves in play.
"Though you may leave this haven we have found, may our strength never leave you."

Cruel Revival
Instant
Destroy target non-Zombie creature. It can't be regenerated. Return up to one target Zombie card from your graveyard to your hand.
Few Cabal fighters fear death. They fear what follows it.

Cruel Revival
Instant
Destroy target non-Zombie creature. It can't be regenerated. Return up to one target Zombie card from your graveyard to your hand.
Few Cabal fighters fear death. They fear what follows it.

Kai's right—Shock is a very strong card in an environment that values mana efficiency the way *Onslaught* Limited does. Sometimes though, the strongest card in a pack isn't the best pick, at least when you look at the advance draft strategy of your selection.

When you're entering a draft in any format, you should go in knowing what "the rule" is. A term coined by Zvi Mowshowitz, "the rule" refers to both what the best color combination in the format is and what the best color combination for you is. The more I think about "the rule" for *Onslaught* draft, the more I'm starting to think that while red is definitely the strongest color in *Onslaught*, it's not necessarily the best color to draft.

See, the problem with drafting red is that you're always in for a dogfight. Everyone's coming to the table hoping to open Sparksmith or Solar Blast or, yes, Shock. You know full well that whoever's drafting in front of you wanted to go red the same way you did, and that if he or she opened one of the those cards, you aren't going to get much for two of the three packs.

While red is heavily contested, white is the unloved stepchild of the set. Rivaling red, green, and black in overall power and depth, white lacks that one marquee common that commits drafters to it with the first pick of the first pack, and that means that players who find good cards early will stick to the other colors. As a result, there are usually only three or sometimes two white drafters at a table. When that happens, those guys get about thirty playable cards each.

Looking at this pack, Cruel Revival is out because it isn't as strong as Shock, the rival removal spell. The blue cards just aren't in the same league (big surprise), and while strong, neither are Akroma's Blessing or Shared Triumph, which would commit you very early to draft a deck with strong tribal leanings. If you're going to do that, you might as well start with the more powerful card: Catapult Squad.

I'm not saying that this 2/1 is more powerful than Shock, although it is close. It's as good a 2-power creature for two mana as you'll find in the format, matching Shock's tempo aspects while at the same time giving you the opportunity to dominate the game later on if your opponent can't deal with it. It gives you inroads towards one of the strongest tribes in the format—Soldiers—and by passing Shock, Cruel Revival, and Symbiotic Beast, you're ensuring that the other white cards in the pack are going to go a long way around the table. It wouldn't be surprising if you got the Blessing the second time around.

There is one problem with taking this approach. White's favorite companion is red, and by passing Shock, it may seem that you're giving up that option, but there are two good reasons why that isn't the case. First, it's possible the drafter on your left will take Symbiotic Beast, Cruel Revival, or Ascending Aven to go with his or her first pick. Second, if the drafter to your left does go into red, you still have the option of going red in front of him or her, majoring in white with its strong creatures to the tune of 15–17 cards and using red as your support, going with 6–8 spells, most of which will be Sparksmiths, rare bombs, Crown of Fury, and one or two single-red mana cost burn spells like Erratic Explosion or Shock.

There are a couple of other options here. You could take Cruel Revival in an attempt to corner the less popular of the two colors of creature kill. There are no other playable black cards in the pack, and this would allow you to potentially cut the color off, which could pay huge dividends in the second pack. You could also conceivably pick Symbiotic Beast for its overall strength, plodding though it might be, as well as its incredible synergy with Nantuko Husk in a forced attempt to draft green-black. The other cards aren't worth comparing.

So yes, if you want to do the safe and predictable thing, you take the Shock, but sometimes, safety doesn't pay. If you need to 3-0, say, the Top 8 of your Pro Tour Qualifier, you don't just need the strong cards, you need the strongest deck, and the synergy provided by a tribal theme offers the greatest potential for that. In that time when you need greatness, I'd recommend the road less traveled: corner the white and march to the win.

Legends and Legions

And Lords, Oh My!

by Mark Rosewater

In this column, I thought I'd talk about the creation of Legends (the creature type, not the expansion). Legends are the most obvious connection between the story and the mechanics of ***Magic****. How do we design them?*

During a set's design, the creative text people send the designers a description of the characters that appear in that year's story arc. The first thing the designers do when they get the list is look and see if any existing cards could function as one of the characters. During *Tempest* design, for instance, the rare Cleric with healing abilities made perfect sense for Orim. Most of the time, though, there's no easy fit, so we have to design creatures to fit the characters. To give you a sense of what issues come up, I'm going to look at two *Odyssey*/*Onslaught* block Legends.

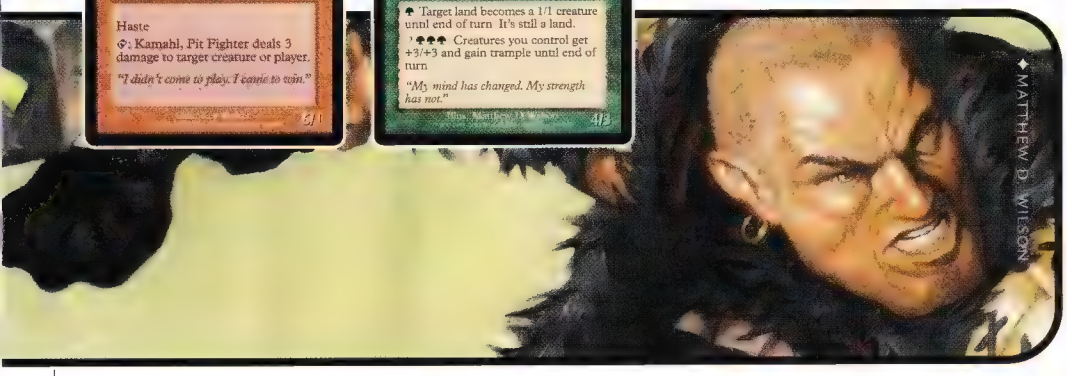
Kamahl, Pit Fighter/Kamahl, Fist of Krosa

We knew in design that the red Kamahl was a Barbarian warrior that needed to have a good fighting ability. Originally, we gave him a combat-related creature ability that we were planning to keyword in the set. That new mechanic was cut during development (to be saved for the future), meaning that Kamahl needed a new ability. For years, we had been talking about making a red haste creature with a tap ability. We thought it would be cool if Kamahl could hurl Lightning Bolts at the opponent. We made him a 6/1 because it played into his aggressive nature and had great synergy with haste.

When *Onslaught* design came around, we wanted to shift Kamahl into green, because in the story he becomes a Druid. He was still a good fighter, but we wanted to shift the way he would be played. We decided to make a creature that would use his abilities to bring nature to the fight. The original version of the green Kamahl (called Kamahl, Land Lord) could animate lands and gave all lands +1/+1, but since *Onslaught* didn't have any other animated lands, the development team changed the second ability so that it gave creatures +3/+3 and trample until end of turn.

Finally, Kamahl's stats were changed to 4/3 to keep him aggressive while reflecting his more defensive ways. Notice that both versions' power and toughness add up to 7.

: Target land becomes a 1/1 creature until end of turn. It's still a land.
: Creatures you control get +3/+3 and gain trample until end of turn
"My mind has changed. My strength has not."



Balthor the Stout/Balthor the Defiled

Because of the story, we knew that there would be a red Dwarf in *Torment* and a black Zombie Dwarf in *Judgment*. For the red Balthor, we wanted to reflect his ability to teach the Barbarians. Early on, I realized that we had never had a Barbarian lord. Balthor fit perfectly. The Zombie half didn't go quite as easily. We wanted to sync the two Balthors up, so we liked the idea that each version enhanced a creature type, but the problem was that Zombies looked strong after *Torment* and the development team was wary of making yet another Zombie lord.

Then I came up with an interesting solution. If Balthor was a Dwarf who enhanced Barbarians when he was alive, why couldn't he be a Zombie that enhanced a non-Zombie race when he was dead? The choice seemed obvious. Just as we had made numerous Barbarians over the years without a lord, black also had a much-used creature type that needed a lord: the Minions. The team agreed with this logic, and we set out to make the Zombie Balthor.

Legends may take a little extra care to create, but the end results are always a joy to watch.

All Barbarians get +1/+1.
: Target Barbarian gets +1/+0 until end of turn.
"I like to think of him as concentrated barbarian."
—Kamahl, pit fighter

Balthor the Defiled
Creature — Zombie Dwarf Legend
All Minions get +1/+1.
: Remove Balthor the Defiled from the game. Each player returns all black and all red creature cards from his or her graveyard to play
He remembers enough of his life to weep

Here are a few hints of what to expect in *Legions*:

- A popular creature type returns
- Morph gets a new twist
- Three new keywords are introduced
- Another popular creature from Alpha comes back
- Akroma and Phage both show up as Legends
- Phyrexian Dreadnaught is replaced by the new largest tournament-legal creature
- A creature steals creature cards from the opponent yet isn't blue or red
- A creature is inspired by a popular red *Ice Age* creature (hint: it showed up in the Top 8 at the 1995 World Championships)
- And a creature is so powerful that it has the following drawback: "When CARDNAME comes into play, if you didn't play it from your hand, you lose the game." (And it's only a 4/4!)

Also, here are a few names from the upcoming set:

- Goblin Assassin
- Havoc Demon
- Merchant of Secrets
- Primal Whisperer
- Scion of Darkness
- Weaver of Lies

Outsider Trading

Birds Back on Top

Grinning Demon in Second

by Alex Shvartsman

— Alex's Power 9 —

The Cards That Are Currently in the Highest Demand

ONSLAUGHT

The new standalone has been around for a few weeks now, and the prices of its most popular singles are beginning to stabilize. It appears that Grinning Demon has weathered the initial collector rush to remain the most sought-after rare in *Onslaught*. Grinning Demon hasn't made it into any tournament decks as of yet, which may drive its value down in coming weeks, but it is also powerful enough to see tournament play if the right Standard archetype comes along for it to fit into. Grinning Demon is trading at around the $14 mark at this time.

Lagging only slightly behind is Blistering Firecat. With Goblin Piledriver and several other attractive cards available for monored and red-black aggro decks, "Sligh" players are coming out of the woodwork to try to bring back that archetype. Blistering Firecat is seen selling at $10–$12.

While the abovementioned creatures may or may not remain valuable in months to come, the new series of fetch lands is a sure bet. At Pro Tour–Houston, Polluted Delta was selling for as much as $20 the night before the tournament. Although that value was very inflated, all the lands are trading at between $7 and $10 consistently. These will remain staples in Standard and will certainly see play in Extended and Block Constructed formats. Every serious tournament player will want four of each fetch land, so it would come as no surprise to see their values stabilize at around $10.

Ravenous Baloth and Visara the Dreadful are both falling just shy of the $10 mark, but like the fetch lands, they are likely to retain significant value after the initial excitement of the new set dies down. Both are enjoyed by casual and tournament players alike.

As time goes by and we learn more about the set, other cards are likely to gain in popularity. For example, could Reading the Runes become the next big thing? Will Exalted Angel become a tournament staple where Serra Angel could not? We'll find out over the course of the next few months.

NEW PROMOS

Promo card collectors out there should get their trade binders ready in order to go after two exciting new cards. The first is a foil Volcanic Hammer, which is awarded to every competitor in Junior Super Series challenges. The DCI Volcanic Hammer features a very cool-looking design based around using the foil material selectively on parts of the artwork.

The latest DCI foil promo was unveiled at Pro Tour–Houston. Foil Tradewind Riders were awarded to staff, judges, and Sideboard reporters who worked at the event. The DCI will continue to give this card out over the course of the next several Pro Tour events until the new foil promo is released, so it will become a bit easier to get your hands on in time.

1

Back in *Eighth Edition* and back on top of the list

2

Biggest and baddest creature in *Onslaught*

3

It ain't Ball Lightning, but it's close

4

T, Pay 1 life, Sacrifice Polluted Delta: Search your library for an island or swamp card and put it into play. Then shuffle your library.

This five-land cycle will see plenty of tournament play

5

Vampiric Tutor
Instant
Pay 2 life. Search your library for a card, put that card on top of your library, then shuffle your library.
"I write upon clean white parchment with a sharp quill and the blood of my students, divining their secrets."
Shauna, Endbringer

PT–Houston's most commonly played rare card

6

Still the best reset button in Standard

7

Hackhammer
X, Sacrifice Pernicious Deed: Destroy each artifact, creature, and enchantment with converted mana cost X or less.
"You, gnath," Freyalise whispered as she set the bomb, "now you will pay for your treachery."

Alive and well in the Extended metagame

8

Nantuko Shade
Creature — Insect Shade
T: Nantuko Shade gets +1/+1 until end of turn.
"If the Nantuko only knew what awaits them beyond death, they would abandon all they hold dear."
Cabal Patriarch

Monoblack decks are down but not out

9

Haunting Echoes
Sorcery
Remove all cards in target player's graveyard other than basic land cards from the game. Search that player's library for all cards with the same name as cards removed this way and remove them from the game. Then that player shuffles his or her library.

Its insanely powerful effect lures pros and casual players alike

DCI Global Rankings

This section highlights the Top 10 ranked players from each country. It uses DCI Composite ratings, which are the averages of the players' Limited and Constructed ratings. Only countries that have at least ten players with Composite ratings are included. The number of sanctioned matches that each person has played is also included. DCI ratings are updated every week on Tuesday night, Pacific time. Wednesday is the best time to view updated ratings.

These ratings are from Tuesday, November 12, 2002. For the most updated ratings and rankings, visit thedci.com.

Argentina

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
	[illegible]	Buenos Aires	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Ariel Russo	Buenos Aires	1958	373
3	Matias Gabrenja	[illegible]	1955	546
4	Gabriel Caligaris	Buenos Aires	1948	495
5	Matias Bollato	[illegible]	1927	373
6	Juan Pablo Alcalde	Córdoba Capital	1920	314
7	Ernesto Mingorance	[illegible]	1917	566
8	Andres Viola	Buenos Aires	1916	514
9	Jose Barbero	Campana	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Nicolas Kohan	Buenos Aires	1909	540

Australia

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	2007	395
2	Andrew Lai	Adelaide	1961	427
1	Nathan Russell	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
3	Dante Rosati	Glen Iris	1921	252
5	Ben Seck	[illegible]	1917	1845
6	Michael Doecke	Adelaide	1913	442
7	Joe Connolly	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Jarron Puszet	Melbourne	1902	745
9	Andrew Gordon	[illegible]	1889	541
10	Daniel Romans	Brisbane	1888	214

Austria

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Markus Jeschel	[illegible]	1973	758
2	Stephan Genser	Salzburg	1937	416
1	Florian Oberauer	[illegible]	1929	695
4	Philip Reich	Vienna	1910	488
4	Stefan Jedlicka	[illegible]	1910	559
6	Benedikt Klauser	Vienna	1901	980
7	Helmut Summersberger	[illegible]	1900	769
8	Mark Loh	Salzburg	1893	634
9	Herbert Engleitner	[illegible]	1892	510
10	Martin Scheuchenstuhl	Wartberg	1885	321

Belgium

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Gert Coeckelbergh	Holsbeek	1950	972
2	Peter Gysemans	Leuven	1913	780
3	Jan Doise	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Stan van der Velden	Heverlee	1888	1149
5	Mats Clays	[illegible]	1882	639
6	Bernardo Da Costa Cabral	Brussel	1874	498
7	Sinan Bolca	[illegible]	1873	353
8	Mathijs Luts	Hasselt	1871	117
9	Vincent Lamoine	[illegible]	1869	170
9	Johan Kennes	Mechelen	1869	291

Brazil

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Carlos Romão	São Paulo	[illegible]	540
2	Leopoldo M. M. Neto	Vitoria	1974	431
3	Victor Galimbertti	Sao Paulo	1970	471
4	Paulo Rosa	Porto Alegre	1951	477
5	Guilherme [illegible]	Porto Alegre	1938	460
6	Ary Capristrani	Porto Alegre	1921	323
7	[illegible]	Sao Paulo	1910	324
8	Raphael Gunther	Jaragua do Sul	1909	277
9	Daniel Brasil do Carmo	Rio de Janeiro	1907	308
10	Ricardo Barros	Jundiai	1904	463

Canada

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Jeff Cunningham	[illegible]	2108	763
2	Gabriel Tsang	Toronto	2063	1292
3	Jürgen Hahn	Toronto	1998	909
4	Terry Tsang	Burnaby	1991	1028
5	David Rood	Montreal	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Jeff Gersti	Thornhill	1945	592
7	Richard Hoaen	Toronto	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Kyle Hadfield	Wolfville	1942	122
9	Ray Weiss	Winnipeg	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Jason Howden	Winnipeg	1935	1328

Chile

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Rodrigo Sánchez Albers	Santiago	1973	302
2	Juan Reutter	Santiago	1969	301
3	Andrés Hojman	Santiago	1935	171
4	Jose Capdevila	Santiago	1923	680
5	Andres Cam[illegible]	[illegible]	1919	548
6	Waldemar Campos	La Serena	1891	359
6	José Luis Paredes	Santiago	1891	243
8	Rafaël Le Saux	Santiago	1885	544
9	Carlos Olguin	Santiago	1872	339
10	Eduardo Pizarro	Santiago	1862	351

China

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Wang Xiao	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Zheng Yan Yang	Guangzhou	1850	236
3	Ning Zhang	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Shu Nu Zhang	Shanghai	1815	204
5	Jun Cai	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Hong Gang Lin	Beijing	1810	182
7	Zhi Giang Cai	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Liang Xu	Beijing	1795	227
9	Zhang Yu	Beijing	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Li Xing	Changsha	1790	97

Croatia

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Ivan Rubelj	Zagreb	[illegible]	666
2	Sasha Zorc	Zagreb	1946	537
3	Denis Zagmester	Zagreb	1923	262
4	Filip Cec	Rijeka	1878	518
5	Danijel Pajur	Zagreb	1870	215
6	Drazen Jezidzic	Vinkovci	1842	337
7	Ladislav Zupancic	Zagreb	1841	484
8	Ivan Solaja	Zagreb	1833	359
9	Lovro Gasparac	Zagreb	1825	367
10	Luka Gasparac	Zagreb	1824	548

Czech Republic

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Vladimir Kosmacky	Prague	2007	1089
2	Jaroslav Sita	Prague	1976	831
3	Jakub Slemr	Prague	1965	1182
4	Tomas Krejsa	Prague	1942	688
5	Jan Mechura	Plzen	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Jan Brodzák	Ostrava	1887	955
7	Roman Zidek	Uherske	1885	1158
8	David Korejcko	Zdar nad Sazavou	1880	269
9	Petr Nahodil	Usti	1874	880
10	Petr Ustohal	Kunim	1871	621

Denmark

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Peter Myrvig	Kolding	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Svend Geertsen	Copenhagen	2000	819
3	Allan Christensen	Aalborg	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Jonas Cleemann	Copenhagen	1950	698
5	Jeppe Balsby	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Peter Laier	Copenhagen	1894	758
6	Jan Sorensen	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Rune Espenhein	Ballerup	1886	670
9	Jesper Thrane	Copenhagen	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	David Jensen	Aalborg	1874	284

Dominican Republic

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Ricardo del Castillo	[illegible]	1860	478
2	Julio Cabrera	Santo Domingo	1842	303
3	Hugo Cruz	[illegible]	1837	399
4	Daniel Cabrera	Santo Domingo	1834	529
5	Cristian Vassallo	[illegible]	1815	233
6	Bryan Dominguez	Santo Domingo	1813	399
7	Eric Perdomo	Santo DOmingo	1798	317
8	Flavio Espinal	Santo Domingo	1786	300
9	Jonathan David	Santo Domingo	1775	361
9	José Hernandez	Santo Domingo	1775	418

England

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Terry Wise	Surrey	2039	1111
2	Oliver Schmeiser	London	1974	1721
3	Max Norris	Cheshire	1936	462
4	David Grant	Surrey	1935	691
5	Martin Garcia	London	1934	529
6	Andrew Mitchell	Maidenhead	1928	691
7	Kian Seng Poon Kok	Greater London	1926	461
8	Tony Adams	Isle Of Wight	1924	762
9	David Hughes	Derby	1921	466
10	Ben Ronaldson	Surrey	1913	733

Estonia

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Ago Kuusik	Tallinn	1819	164
2	Martti Lauri	Tallinn	1769	228
3	Kaspar Tint	Tartu	1744	199
4	Veljo Haug	Tartu	1736	428
5	Juhan Kaldre	Tartu	1731	387
6	Mart Pechter	Tartu	1726	331
7	Margus Lillo	Tartu	1721	146
8	Tanel Lumiste	Tartu	1717	399
9	Kristjan Pilmaa	Tallinn	1712	152
10	Neeme Loorits	Tallinn	1711	275

Finland

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Tuomas Kuosmanen	Helsinki	2057	557
2	Tomi Walamies	Kauniainen	2020	1162
3	Lauri Hirvi	Espoo	2000	744
4	Antti Puurula	Kerava	1923	269
5	Arto Hiltunen	Helsinki	1921	682
5	Mikko Punakallio	Helsinki	1921	516
7	Heikki Hirsi	Jyväskylä	1915	806
8	Jussi Perala	Vaasa	1906	396
9	Ossi Saviaro	Turku	1884	324
10	Jussi Salovaara	Helsinki	1880	499

France

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Christophe Haim	Paris	2052	794
2	Gabriel Nassif	Paris	2036	1862
3	Raphael Levy	Toulouse	2031	992
3	Nicolas Labarre	Rennes	2031	565
5	Frederic Lourties	Nice	2011	1069
6	Amiel Tenenbaum	Bagnolet	2007	1208
7	Franck Cassi	Nice	1997	961
8	Antoine Ruel	Aubervilliers	1979	1470
9	Thierry Janiaut	Paris	1977	1462
10	Nicolas Olivieri	Montpellier	1970	974

Germany

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Dirk Baberowski	Salzgitter	2081	752
2	David Brucker	Munchen	2073	735
3	Kai Budde	Hamburg	2058	1727
3	Jens Krause	Bremen	2058	539
5	Dimitri Tint	Bochum	2037	191
6	Christian Lührs	Bendestorf	1995	1047
7	Markus Ball	Koln	1982	448
8	Mark Ziegner	Mainz	1982	921
9	Dennis Schmidt	Augsburg	1980	437
10	Holger Meinecke	Rutesheim	1947	1078

Greece

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Jon Kosmidis	Thessaloniki	1979	364
2	Alex Bakopoulos	Thessaloniki	1915	955
3	Dimitris Kopsidas	Iraklio	1881	291
4	Dimitris Aperghis	Athens	1873	612
4	Georgios Kapelis	Kilkis	1864	727
5	Simon Bertiou	Athens	1864	461
7	Panayiotis Zachariou	Nicosia	1851	699
8	Ioannis Balis	Keratsini	1854	349
9	Alex Sarantidis	Nafpli	1851	442
10	Dimitrios Chatzios	Thessaloniki	1835	341

Hong Kong

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Hong Lok Yan	Hong Kong	1977	532
2	Johnson Wan	Hong Kong	1973	448
3	Ngai Kwok Hing	Kowloon	1891	186
4	King Yim Tong	Hong Kong	1871	543
5	Chee Hong Wong	Hong Kong	1856	377
6	Stephen Ho	Central	1863	427
7	Kai Cheung Tang	Hong Kong	1859	161
8	Shing Hong Ngan	Hong Kong	1843	161
9	Ng Teddy	Hong Kong	1843	994
9	Kai Yip Lee	Kowloon	1843	186

Hungary

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Zsolt Szabó	Budapest	1884	728
2	Marcell Kertész	Budapest	1877	313
3	Gabor Figy	Budapest	1864	736
3	Andras Balogh	Szekesfehervar	1864	362
5	Gergely Gordos	Budapest	1847	493
6	Károly Lipcsik	Budapest	1831	397
7	Laszlo Csiba	Kaposvar	1821	181
8	Michael Dudas	Budapest	1818	746
9	Tamas Nagy	balmazujvaros	1812	141
10	Tibor Miklos	Budapest	1811	237

Iceland

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Arnlaugur Arnlaugsson	Reykjavik	1842	168
2	Hjalti Andrason	Kopavogur	1803	55
3	Sigurdur Sigurdsson	Reykjavik	1799	334
4	Robert Ulfarsson	Reykjavik	1741	142
5	Gunnar Johannesson	Reykjavik	1736	118
6	Martainn Fridriksson	Reykjavik	1714	233
7	Hilmir Kjartansson	Gardabaer	1711	152
8	Stefan Fridriksson	Reykjavik	1710	174
9	Johann Moller	Reykjavik	1702	153
10	Ragnar Kjartansson	Reykjavik	1687	258

Indonesia

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Hokseen Wijaya	Jakarta	1849	991
2	Donny Kristianto	Surabaya	1826	298
3	Hefly Pudjiadjaja	Jakarta	1799	161
4	Andy Budiharto	Surabaya	1785	337
5	Rudy Tanjaya	Jakarta Utara	1775	252
6	Oliver Suryatenggara	Tangerang	1761	173
7	Kevin Tanoto	Jakarta Utara	1760	119
8	Jonson Sulaeman	Jakarta Barat	1757	94
9	Andreas Pramono	Semarang	1744	128
10	Rudolf Sukeandra	Surabaya	1740	261

Ireland

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	John Lavery	Dublin	1944	468
2	David Kearney	Dublin	1943	534
3	Stewart Shinkins	Limerick	1916	745
4	Robert Mckeon	Dublin	1856	445
5	Diarmuid Quirke	Cork	1854	282
6	Oliver Hyde	Cork	1834	257
7	Cormac Smith	Cork	1811	118
8	Ciaran Lawlor	Dublin	1802	214
9	Alan Rooney	Waterford	1801	236
10	Juson Walsh	Limerick	1796	354

Israel

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Uri Peleg	Ramat Gan	1922	305
2	Evgeny Golobrodsky	Givatayim	1910	181
3	Orr Bildner	Tel Aviv	1812	111
4	Daniel Bird	Haifa	1807	231
5	Yoni Iny	Jerusalem	1797	144
6	Eyal Leshem	Jerusalem	1796	161
7	Haim Israel	Ramat Hasharon	1784	174
8	Ayal Hasidim	Jerusalem	1783	141
9	Nadav Fanny	Jerusalem	1764	111
10	Gidi Aviram	Tel-Aviv	1763	236

Italy

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Marco Lombardi	Genova	2021	775
2	Andrea Santin	Trieste	2016	538
3	Marco Bertuzzi	Roma	1966	1184
4	Daniele Cassano	Gallarate	1962	782
5	Marco Pasi	Roma	1961	711
5	Norberto Giusti	Bologna	1957	417
7	Marco Bertini	Lecce	1956	614
8	Dario Cuomo	Napoli	1954	398
9	Stefano Turi	Roma	1952	1260
9	Alessandro Vegna	La Spezia	1952	571

Japan

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Itaru Ishida	Meguro-ku	2053	1031
2	Gorou Matsuo	Kahoku-gun	2006	519
3	Yu Uchiyama	Yokohama	2004	1183
4	Takao Higuki	Kamo-gun	2001	794
5	Akira Asahara	Sagamihara-shi	1971	343
6	Eisaku Itadaki	Kurashiki-shi	1965	682
7	Shuichi Sekiguchi	Kawasaki-shi	1959	1048
8	Tsuyoshi Ikeda	Fukuoka-shi	1956	726
9	Kazuhiro Mori	Shinagawa-ku	1954	1241
10	Jun'ichi Kinoshita	Sennan-gun	1953	950

Luxembourg

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Charles Delvaux	Luxembourg	1830	267
2	Fabrice Encelle	Epinal	1780	283
3	Romain Linck	Kayl	1772	82
4	Jerome Vilmi	Strasbourg	1770	389
5	Daniel Collignon	Kayl	1734	111
6	Charel Lorang	Luxembourg	1726	180
7	Fabrice Cretin	Montigny-les-Metz	1699	35
8	Steve Hacko	Esch	1679	148
9	Daniel Kayl	Remerange	1671	111
10	Jhemp Weinmacher	Luxembourg	1663	53

Malaysia

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Han How Sim	Selangor	2011	320
2	Wai Kin Au Yong	Petaling Jaya	1929	512
3	Mun Wye Tang	[illegible]	1925	336
4	Pang Ming Wee	Selangor	1911	642
5	Joe Soh	Petaling Jaya	1895	697
6	Weng Kwong Aw Yeong	Georgetown	1889	318
7	Terry Soh	Petaling Jaya	1874	701
8	Kim Yin Kok	Kuala Lumpur	1860	449
9	Kok Weng Chan	Ipoh	1859	431
10	Tan Chuen Hwa	Kuala Lumpur	1858	647

Mexico

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Gerardo Godinez Estrada	Nezahualcoyotl	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Alexander Sacal	Mexico City	1915	729
3	Francisco Barboza	Mexico City	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Hugo Araiza	Mexico City	1878	589
5	Carlos Medina	Mexico City	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Jorge Gonzalez	Mexico City	1849	558
7	Gustavo Chapela	Mexico City	1843	[illegible]
8	Julio Vazquez	Mexico City	1839	366
9	Fernando Dominguez Roldan	[illegible]	1813	[illegible]
10	Luis Ramos	Mexico City	1810	340

Netherlands

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Kamiel Cornelissen	Enschede	2109	906
2	Jeroen Remie	Dongen	2101	755
3	Jelger Wiegersma	Eindhoven	2052	1328
4	Joost Vollebregt	Amsterdam	2035	750
5	Tom van de Logt	[illegible]	2022	738
6	Alexander Witt	Amsterdam	2014	1073
7	Ruud Warmenhoven	Tilburg	1980	850
8	Victor van den Broek	Eindhoven	1977	717
9	Bas Postema	Tilburg	1966	1010
10	Noah Boeken	Amsterdam	1945	1164

New Zealand

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Scott Richards	Amberley	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Cole Swannack	Auckland	1980	418
3	James White	Auckland	1951	553
4	Sergey Norin	Palmerston North	1905	1086
5	Kerel Laycock	Palmerston North	1886	368
6	Julian Brown-Santirso	Amberley	1883	488
7	Digby Carter	[illegible]	1861	386
8	Brett Rogers	Wellington	1846	431
9	Shawn Chang	Auckland	1844	225
10	Damian Brown-Santirso	Christchurch	1843	616

Northern Ireland

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Sean McNally	Lisburn	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	David Gray	Belfast	1810	642
3	Thomas Michael Carlisle	Carrickfergus	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Thomas Monaghan	Holywood	1784	374
5	Adrian Donnelly	Belfast	[illegible]	[illegible]
5	Roger Dare	Belfast	1752	568
7	Gareth Middleton	Belfast	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Ronan Donnelly	Antrim	1722	309
9	Mark Hunter	Belfast	[illegible]	[illegible]
9	Colin McBurney	County Armagh	1721	692

Norway

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	Oslo	2034	1010
2	Øyvind Ødegaard	Oslo	2001	1743
3	Nicolai Herzog	Oslo	1972	1498
4	Bjørn Jocumsen	Jessheim	1965	1229
5	Thomas Gundersen	Trondheim	1940	676
6	Endre Skjetne	Oslo	1936	756
7	Haakon Monsen	[illegible]	1909	1140
8	Kristian Fossaa	Oslo	1904	555
9	Sigurd Eskeland	[illegible]	1901	1295
9	Erik Nebell	Skårer	1901	1034

Peru

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Jorge Melgar	[illegible]	1923	324
2	Steven Hoyos	Lima	1898	301
3	Juan Carlos Fort	[illegible]	1852	344
4	Renato Bustamante	Arequipa	1831	155
5	Rosse Da Fieno	[illegible]	1796	286
5	Guillermo Bejarano	Lima	1796	196
7	Antonio Vargas	Lima	1774	191
8	Waldry de Oliveira S.	Lima	1773	116
9	Anthony Avendaño	Lima	1742	136
10	Eduardo Torres	Lima	1735	230

Philippines

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Gerald Camangon	Manila	[illegible]	471
2	Dominic Ortega	Makati	1911	913
3	Bayani Manansala	Caloocan City	[illegible]	418
4	Richard Anthony Galano	Makati	1870	630
5	Mano Padua	Quezon City	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Richie Chua	Quezon City	1860	339
7	Uson Perry Winston	Manila	1856	319
8	Felix Gonzales	Canlubang	1854	888
8	Edsel Alvarez	Quezon City	[illegible]	595
10	Michael Tom Batac	Quezon City	1851	233

Poland

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Pawel Sierocinski	Wiktorow	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Przemek Wolowiec	Bytom	1918	712
3	Mateusz Mroz	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Martin Sados	Warszawa	1860	268
5	Jarek Paszkiewicz	Szczecin	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Krzysztof Domaszewski	Warszawa	1855	529
7	Adrian Ciszek	Krakow	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Mariusz Gorniak	Pruszkow	1852	699
9	Lukasz Cieron	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Przemek Oberbek	Warsaw	1849	1000

Portugal

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Pedro Baliscaeira	Forte da Casa	1943	526
3	[illegible]	[illegible]	1928	699
4	Tiago Chan	Lisbon	1925	954
5	Kuniyoshi Ishii	Vila Franca de Xira	1922	961
6	Helder Coelho	Lisbon	1921	893
7	Ricardo Duarte	Mafra	1921	733
8	Rui Mariant	Lisbon	1918	857
9	Renato Graça	[illegible]	1917	622
9	Hugo Machado	Lisbon	1917	868

Russian Federation

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Alex Yatsenko	Moscow	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Albert Khamzin	Novosibirsk	1909	1115
3	Maxim Linov	Saint Petersburg	1905	1512
4	Dmitry Karmanov	Saint Petersburg	1903	1298
5	Alexei Shestak	Saint Petersburg	[illegible]	673
6	Alexander Strakhov	Moscow	1871	1259
7	Vladimir Vetrov	Moscow	1867	873
8	Yaroslav Kondratiev	Saint Petersburg	1862	1303
9	Dmitry Potapov	Saratov	1857	604
10	Eugene Roginski	Moscow	1852	1067

Scotland

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Julian Haigh	Perth	1920	1583
2	Edward Ross	Beith	1919	786
3	[illegible]	Aberdeenshire	1862	483
4	Darryl Tweedale	Edinburgh	1843	607
5	Andrew Tee	Dundee	1838	301
6	Gary Campbell	Benholm	1829	1369
7	Benjamin Sanders	Midlothian	1820	525
8	Silas Bath	Dundee	1814	848
9	Rob Brooks	Dundee	1804	824
10	Graham Thomson	Roslin	1780	434

Singapore

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Yujian Zhou	Singapore	1986	744
2	Royce Chai	Singapore	1934	834
3	Albertus Law	[illegible]	1946	950
4	Sam Lau	Singapore	1938	814
5	Chang Chua	Singapore	1932	588
6	Lance Yeong	Singapore	1902	556
7	Gary Tan	Singapore	1896	233
8	Rondy Krish	Singapore	1893	227
9	Kok Seng Ong	Singapore	1885	515
10	David Kwan	Singapore	1887	888

Slovak Republic

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	Bratislava	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Tomas Tomecek	Bratislava	1911	277
3	Juraj Smrek	Bratislava	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Peter Bero	Bratislava	1851	568
5	Rasto Stranak	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Robert Jurkovic	Bratislava	1838	703
7	Martin Polak	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Andrej Gallus	Nitra	1798	746
9	Peter Mrkva	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Richard Von Glasner	Bratislava	1780	185

Slovenia

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Andrej Brglez	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Anze Avsec	Ljubljana	1865	504
3	Jakob Tomse	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Lavs Primoz	Ljubljana	1845	399
5	Andrej Rizner	Ankaran	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Mateuz Asic	Ljubljana	1808	213
7	Zeljko Vasic	Portoroz	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Ziga Skrbec	Ljubljana	1782	633
9	Andrej Brezavscek	Ljubljana	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Andrej Renko	Ljubljana	1776	737

South Africa

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Pieter Loubser	Bellville	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Andrew Klein	Cape Town	1929	548
3	Jason Neale	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Alan Campbell	Cape Town	1880	458
5	Christiaan Du Plessis	Pietersburg	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	David Hofmeyr	Johannesburg	1869	474
7	Russel Lunt	Cape Town	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Arne Norton	Claremont	1857	333
9	Thomas van Heerden	Cape Town	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Jaco Prinsloo	Pretoria	1847	250

South Korea

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Sang Seok Lee	Anyang	1807	201
3	[illegible]	[illegible]	1799	[illegible]
4	Sang-Ryool Lee	Seoul	1798	499
5	[illegible]	[illegible]	1779	140
6	Sudong Kim	Seoul	1774	108
7	Joon-ho Hong	[illegible]	1763	108
8	Hyun Woo Jeong	Seongnam	1759	266
9	[illegible]	[illegible]	1753	253
10	Joshua Cho	Apo	1751	192

Spain

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	1976	532
2	Roc Hernes	Rubi	1954	681
3	[illegible]	[illegible]	1948	492
4	Daniel Berhencourt	Vilanova i la Geltru	1929	519
5	Hector Fuentes	[illegible]	1915	440
6	David Garcia Copete	Alicante	1897	597
7	Ivan Garcia	[illegible]	1888	166
8	Oscar Paez	Barcelona	1888	494
9	[illegible]	Madrid	1884	264
10	Daniel Martin	Rivas-Vaciamdrid	1883	469

Sweden

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Anton Jonsson	[illegible]	2047	364
2	Mattias Jorstedt	Göteborg	2037	1214
3	Jens Thoren	[illegible]	2036	683
4	Mattias Kettil	Molndal	1989	276
5	Rickard Osterberg	Göteborg	1982	631
6	Olle Rade	Göteborg	1980	638
7	Johan Sadeghpour	Umeå	[illegible]	635
8	David Linder	Norrtalje	1955	446
8	Fredrik Boberg	Linköping	1955	411
10	Mattias Wåglin	Västerås	1929	315

Switzerland

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Dave Montreuil	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Gennari Raphael	Genève	1923	[illegible]
3	Michael Mayer	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Omar Rohner	Madrid	1895	468
5	Mario Steger	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Tommi Lindgren	Hombrechtikon	1882	657
7	Martin Zuercher	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Ernst Schipper	Zurich	1868	686
9	Christian Strebel	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Benjamin Niedrig	Berikon	1857	521

Taiwan

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Chiang Nien	[illegible]	[illegible]	532
2	Wen Jien Hwang	Nantou	1953	445
3	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Chi Chung Hwang	Taipei	1936	754
5	Chen-Yu Weng	[illegible]	[illegible]	787
6	Norris Ming Jer Song	Taipei	1886	999
7	Lucifar Sun	Taipei	1878	688
8	Tobey Tamber	Kaohsiung	1877	1589
9	John Chou	Taipei	1874	353
10	Morris Song	Song Shang	1871	139

Thailand

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Mongkol Tachasukjai	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Veerapat Sirilertvorakul	Samutsakorn	1880	524
3	Arvi Limpadanai	Bangkok	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Boonchai Jirapongtrakul	Samutsakorn	1856	534
5	Sukhum Kiwanont	Bangkok	[illegible]	[illegible]
5	Krittapol Krittamanorot	Bangkok	1828	536
7	Suttiporn Udomrattanamanee	Bangkok	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Phattharaset Yeodkolkij	Bangkok	1821	264
9	Prapon Maneecharoenwong	Bangkok	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Ekapong Pronpormlikit	Bangkok	1811	371

Turkey

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Sipar Ersen	[illegible]	[illegible]	317
2	Basar Coskunoglu	Istanbul	1835	179
3	Yusuf Vefa	[illegible]	[illegible]	401
4	Eda Bilsel	Istanbul	1820	179
5	Burcak Caner	Istanbu	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Vedat Özpriaho	Istanbul	1797	177
7	Hakki Özbasli	Izmir	[illegible]	230
8	Baris Ozistek	Istanbul	1756	134
9	Mustafa Ertol	Istanbul	[illegible]	136
9	Osman Ozguney	Istanbul	1749	194

Ukraine

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Sergey Kuznetsov	[illegible]	1972	656
2	Andrey Rybalchenko	Kiev	1951	533
3	Yuri Kuhmenko	Kiev	1896	1192
4	Artem Kozachuk	Kiev	1871	1078
5	Rostyslav Savchuk	Kiev	1827	1335
6	Andrey Gubachev	Poltava	1816	628
7	Lev Ankudinov	Kyiv	1814	908
8	Andrey Arzounian	Odessa	1809	390
9	Andrey Alekseev	Kiev	1804	785
10	Andrey Pochekuev	Kyiv	1783	433

United Arab Emirates

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Mark Marsden	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Russel Mirara	Dubai	1800	333
3	Jordan Gallant	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Jeff Kearns	Abu Dhabi	1718	322
5	Jakes Kraz	Dubai	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Vishak Menon	Dubai	1679	153
7	Glenn Caratao	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Dylan Koopman	Dubai	1658	28
9	James Dabbs	Abu Dhabi	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Chelsea Gallant	Dubai	1647	250

United States

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Bob Maher	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Robert Dougherty	Cambridge	2082	1148
3	Matthew Ranks	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Justin Gary	North Miami Beach	2072	818
5	Brian Selden	San Diego	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Thomas Guevin	Nashua	2039	1007
7	William Jensen	College Park	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Jason Schickl	Denver	2036	1029
8	Gabe Walls	[illegible]	[illegible]	758
10	Brian Kibler	Atlanta	2033	794

Uruguay

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	1861	401
2	Fernando Veiga	Montevideo	1826	610
3	Jorge Estefan	Montevideo	1822	396
4	Jong-Woo Kim	Montevideo	1817	614
5	Guillermo Grunsky	Montevideo	[illegible]	471
6	Rodrigo Asuaga	Montevideo	1811	309
7	Guzman Vilanova	Montevideo	1810	234
8	Alexander Westenius	Montevideo	1808	310
9	Guillermo Capra	Montevideo	[illegible]	220
10	Ian Lampel	Montevideo	1802	470

Venezuela

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Leonardo Uzcategui	Cabudare	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	Jhoenie Goncalves	San Antonio de los Alt	1861	258
3	Eduardo Muñoz	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
4	Jonatan Alves	Caracas	1806	258
5	Marlon Garcia	Caracas	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Edward Peraza	Barquisimeto	1786	395
7	Carlos Pire	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Gaspar Del Riego	Valencia	1768	193
9	Jesus Somaza	Barquisimeto	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Rafael Meneses	Caracas	1755	275

Wales

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	Richard Edbury	Cardiff	1913	1030
2	Roy Williams	Swansea	[illegible]	[illegible]
3	Robert Lloyd	[illegible]	1857	[illegible]
4	Madog Williams	Cardiff	1842	633
5	Ioan Llwyd	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Steve Batten	Penarth	1800	321
7	Clint Oldridge	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
8	Simon Cox	Bridgend	1769	452
9	Martin Lawrence	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
10	Steve Hill	Cardiff	1748	313

Yugoslavia

Rank	Name	City	Rating	Matches
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	1841	370
2	Dusan Karmanov	Novi Sad	1807	562
3	Isidor Nikolic	[illegible]	1793	293
4	Iazar grkavac	Novi Sad	1780	279
5	Dane Basta	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
6	Milos Milutinov	Beograd	1746	120
7	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	355
8	Milutin Kecojevic	Beograd	1725	157
9	Marko Mladjan	[illegible]	[illegible]	85
10	Linos Golik	Novi Sad	1695	117

Ask the DCI

In each issue, DCI Manager Jeff Donais answers questions from Sideboard *readers. To submit a question, email jeff.donais@wizards.com with "Ask the DCI" as the subject line. Questions may be edited for grammar and readability.*

Q: I noticed that the prize money is different for third and fourth place at a Pro Tour. Since there isn't a playoff to determine third and fourth, how do you determine the positions?

A: At the end of the Swiss rounds of a tournament, players have standings based on their match points and separated by certain tiebreakers, including their opponents' match win percentages. Once they go into the single-elimination Top 8 rounds, their Swiss standings determine how they'll finish if they lose in the quarterfinals (fifth through eighth place) or semifinals (third and fourth place). The higher a player's Swiss standing, the higher his or her standing in the Top 8.

It follows that a player who was ranked first after the Swiss portion of a tournament would finish in fifth place if he or she lost in the quarterfinals, since nobody else who lost in the quarterfinals could have had a higher Swiss standing. This provides a slight incentive for players to do well in the Swiss, especially if there is a prize difference for every position in the Top 8, such as at Pro Tour events.

Q: How does the DCI Player Rewards program work?

A: If you are a member of the Player Rewards program, for every five DCI sanctioned **Magic** tournaments that you play in, you are awarded a special token card. For every twenty sanctioned tournaments, you are awarded a premium foil card. Some of the foil cards given out in the past include Wasteland, Forbid, and Crusade. The cards are mailed several times a year, so you may have to wait up to six months to get them, but they are usually worth it. Note that if a tournament organizer doesn't send in his or her tournament report, you get no credit, so make sure your organizer always sends in the reports.

DCI PLAYER REWARDS

Q: How do I get on the Pro Tour?

A: The quickest way to get on the Pro Tour is to win a Pro Tour Qualifier (PTQ). Almost 1,000 PTQs are run each year around the world. Many players keep playing in PTQs until they do well enough to earn an invitation to the Pro Tour. PTQ schedules are available at **wizards.com/protour**.

Another good way to get a Pro Tour invitation is through a Grand Prix event. A Grand Prix is like a combination of a huge PTQ and a mini Pro Tour. Grand Prix events award $25,000 in prize money and give away eight spots for the upcoming Pro Tour. If you have a good DCI rating, you can earn byes—automatic wins during the first rounds of the tournament. In addition, if you've never been on the Pro Tour, you probably qualify to win Amateur Award cash prizes. More information can be found at **wizards.com/grandprix**.

Another way to earn a Pro Tour invitation is to get a high DCI rating. If you play in as many tournaments as possible, you could earn a high rating and get a Pro Tour invitation. This takes practice, but it's a lot of fun to compete in tournaments and you'll get better as you do it.

Q: When I play Magic in Arena league, do the matches count toward my DCI rating?

A: No. Only matches that take place in DCI sanctioned tournaments count towards your DCI rating. However, many **Arena** organizers use DCI sanctioned formats (such as Standard, Extended, and Sealed Deck) as the formats for their leagues.

DCI Format Construction Rules

For the most updated DCI deck construction rules, check **thedci.com**

Standard

Permitted Sets
Seventh Edition
Odyssey
Torment
Judgment
Onslaught
Legions
Scourge

Banned Cards
None

Onslaught Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Onslaught
Legions
Scourge

Banned Cards
None

Odyssey Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Odyssey
Torment
Judgment

Banned Cards
None

Invasion Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Invasion
Planeshift
Apocalypse

Banned Cards
None

Masques Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Mercadian Masques
Nemesis
Prophecy

Banned Cards
Lin Sivvi, Defiant Hero
Rishadan Port

Urza Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Urza's Saga
Urza's Legacy
Urza's Destiny

Banned Cards
Gaea's Cradle
Memory Jar
Serra's Sanctum
Time Spiral
Tolarian Academy
Voltaic Key
Windfall

Tempest Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Tempest
Stronghold
Exodus

Banned Cards
Cursed Scroll

Mirage Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Mirage
Visions
Weatherlight

Banned Cards
Squandered Resources

Ice Age Block Constructed

Permitted Sets
Ice Age
Alliances
Homelands

Banned Cards
Amulet of Quoz
Thawing Glaciers
Timmerian Fiends
Zuran Orb

Extended

Permitted Sets
Classic (Sixth Edition)
Seventh Edition
Tempest
Stronghold
Exodus
Urza's Saga
Urza's Legacy
Urza's Destiny
Mercadian Masques
Nemesis
Prophecy
Invasion
Planeshift
Apocalypse
Odyssey
Torment
Judgment
Onslaught

Banned Cards
Dark Ritual
Dream Halls
Earthcraft
Lotus Petal
Memory Jar
Mind Over Matter
Replenish
Survival of the Fittest
Time Spiral
Tolarian Academy
Windfall
Yawgmoth's Bargain
Yawgmoth's Will

Type 1

Permitted Sets
All basic and expansion sets and promotional cards

Banned Cards
Amulet of Quoz
Bronze Tablet
Chaos Orb
Contract from Below
Darkpact
Demonic Attorney
Falling Star
Jeweled Bird
Rebirth
Tempest Efreet
Timmerian Fiends

Restricted Cards
Ancestral Recall
Balance
Berserk
Black Lotus
Black Vise
Braingeyser
Channel
Crop Rotation
Demonic Consultation
Demonic Tutor
Doomsday
Dream Halls
Enlightened Tutor
Fact or Fiction
Fastbond
Fork
Frantic Search
Grim Monolith
Hurkyl's Recall
Library of Alexandria
Lotus Petal
Mana Crypt
Mana Vault
Memory Jar
Mind Over Matter
Mind Twist
Mox Diamond
Mox Emerald
Mox Jet
Mox Pearl
Mox Ruby
Mox Sapphire
Mystical Tutor
Necropotence
Recall
Regrowth
Sol Ring
Strip Mine
Stroke of Genius
Time Spiral
Time Walk
Timetwister
Tinker
Tolarian Academy
Vampiric Tutor
Voltaic Key
Wheel of Fortune
Windfall
Yawgmoth's Bargain
Yawgmoth's Will

Type 1.5

Permitted Sets
All basic and expansion sets and promotional cards

Banned Cards
All cards on the Type 1 Banned and Restricted lists.

Worldwide Tournament News

by Jeff Donais, DCI Tournament Manager

Upcoming Grand Prix Action

The **Magic** community is looking forward to Grand Prix–New Orleans. The event will take place on January 5–6. The last Grand Prix event in New Orleans was one of the most talked-about social events of the year and included one top player who missed Day 2 due to excessive partying the night before. This event will probably be extremely popular and will be the top location to be if you want to play **Magic** on that weekend.

The event following New Orleans will be the last of the Pro Tour–Venice qualifying tournaments, Grand Prix–Hiroshima. As the last Extended Grand Prix, I expect a number of international players to attend in hopes of securing money, pro points, and invitations to Pro Tour–Venice. The Extended season has been very popular, and the Extended metagame rewards players who keep abreast of the latest tech. Grand Prix–Hiroshima will take place on January 25–26. It will probably be just as big as New Orleans, if not bigger.

The qualifier season for Pro Tour–Yokohama has some confirmed Grand Prix stops, including Boston on February 22–23 and Singapore and Kyoto, both on March 29–30. Grand Prix–Boston will undoubtedly be huge, with 600 people expected.

These Grand Prix events will feature *Onslaught-Legions* Sealed Deck on the first day and Booster Draft on the second day. Players who attend the Grand Prix events will have to figure out the best strategies for drafting a solid deck once *Legions* comes out. *Sideboard* Online will have the top pros analyzing the metagame once *Legions* has been officially unveiled.

Later in 2003, Grand Prix events are planned for Prague, Madrid, Shanghai, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Atlanta, Yokohama, Stockholm, and Munich, among others.

All these events feature $25,000 prize payouts, with $7,500 dedicated to amateur-category players who haven't earned pro points. Check out the calendar on page 62 for more details and dates. You can also visit **wizards.com/grandprix** for an updated Grand Prix schedule and event fact sheets.

Legions PRERELEASE

January 25 and 26 will be the days of the *Legions* prerelease tournaments. As always, players who attend will receive a unique premium rare from the set. Prerelease tournaments are the best deal around, with your entry fee getting you a fun day of play, an exclusive promo card, an *Onslaught* tournament pack, and three boosters of *Legions*. *Legions* has some exciting new cards that are sure to impact the Standard tournament environment and will help solidify strategies for *Onslaught* Block Constructed. The morph mechanic in particular will get some strong new additions. Check out our *Legions* sneak preview on page 30 of the magazine. Prerelease schedules are always available at **wizards.com/tournaments**.

Magic The Gathering REGIONALS

Most countries will be running Regionals sometime in April or early May. The main purpose of playing in Regionals is to get a shot at playing in your National Championship. If you miss Regionals, many countries have last-minute qualifiers the day before Nationals that can help you earn a spot. The format for all Regional tournaments is Standard Constructed. For more information, check out wizards.com/tournaments.

Magic The Gathering ARENA LEAGUE

There are some great improvements to **Arena** league for 2003. This program is run out of retail stores and is a good way of supporting both retailers and players who love **Magic**.

One of the new bonuses for **Arena** in 2003 is a special edition life counter for the champion in each store. The life counter will feature an image from the newest **Magic** expansion and will be part of an extremely limited edition. There will be a new life counter associated with each expansion, and each one will be rarer than a Beta Black Lotus.

Another bonus is the limited edition **Arena** lands. Every year, the art for a set of five basic lands will be done by a top **Magic** artist. The lands will form one large panoramic picture when they are laid side by side. Each **Arena** store will receive ten lands per kit to give out to players who participate regularly in **Arena** league. The lands are not foil, so they can be used safely in all decks without fear that they will appear marked. They have the special DCI expansion symbol.

In addition, players who do well in their **Arena** league will have the opportunity to win **Arena** prize cards. These cards will be from the newest expansion and will be tournament-level commons or uncommons. They will also feature the DCI expansion symbol.

Super Magic The Gathering Series

Junior Super Series

The Junior Super Series (JSS) keeps rolling along. New Volcanic Hammer promotional premium cards were produced for the 2002–2003 season, and the popular premium version of City of Brass is being brought back as a prize. JSS Challenges will be held all over North America and offer $1,000 scholarships for first place. The Super Series program is open to players that are 15 years and younger and is run mostly in North America.

The 2003 JSS Championship will again be held in conjunction with the U.S. National Championship on June 28–29. Both events will move to a new city: San Diego, California. San Diego is an amazing city and has many things to do for families who are in town for the Championship, including the world famous San Diego Zoo. The Championship will have the feel of a convention to it, with famous **Magic** artists signing cards, pro players helping as "deck doctors", Mark Rosewater's Magic Quiz Show, lots of side events, and maybe even an appear from Richard Garfield if we're lucky.

City of Brass
Land
Whenever City of Brass becomes tapped, it deals 1 damage to you.
: Add one mana of any color to your mana pool.

As always, the JSS Championship will feature $100,000 in scholarship prize money. You can read coverage of the 2002 JSS Championship at **Sideboard.com** or in issue #42 of *Sideboard* magazine.

Events Calendar

January–December 2003

January

December–January **Qualifier Season for PT–Venice** Extended
4–5 **Grand Prix–New Orleans** Extended
16–19 **Chicago Masters Series** Standard
17–19 **Pro Tour–Chicago** Rochester Draft
25–26 **Grand Prix–Singapore** Extended
25–26 **Grand Prix–Hiroshima** Extended
25–26 ***Legions* Prerelease** Sealed Deck

February

February–April **Qualifier Season for PT–Yokohama** Sealed with Booster Draft finals
3 ***Legions* Release Date**
22–23 **Grand Prix–Boston** Sealed with Booster Draft finals

March

20–23 **Venice Masters Series** Team Rochester
21–23 **Pro Tour–Venice** Block Constructed
29–30 **Grand Prix–Kyoto** Sealed with Booster Draft finals
29–30 **Grand Prix–Singapore** Sealed with Booster Draft finals

May

May–July **Qualifier Season for PT–Boston** Team Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
tbd **Grand Prix–Madrid** Team Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
3 **Canada Regionals** Standard
3 **U.S. Regionals** Standard
8–11 **Yokohama Masters Series** Extended
9–11 **Pro Tour–Yokohama** Booster Draft
17–18 ***Scourge* Prerelease** Sealed Deck
26 ***Scourge* Release Date**

June

13–15 **Japan National Championship** Standard & Rochester Draft
20–22 **Canada National Championship–Montreal** Standard & Rochester Draft
27–29 **European Championship–London** Standard & Rochester Draft
27–29 **U.S. National Championship–San Diego** Standard & Rochester Draft
26–29 **Origins International Game Expo & Fair–Columbus**
28 **Amateur Championship at Origins** Standard
28–29 **Junior Super Series Championship–San Diego** Standard

July

tbd **Grand Prix–Shanghai** Standard
tbd **Grand Prix–Detroit** Team Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
17–20 **San Diego Comic-Con**
24–27 **Gen Con Game Fair–Indianapolis**
26 **Type 1 Championship at Gen Con** Type 1
28 ***Eighth Edition* Release Date**

August

August–September **Qualifier Season for PT–New Orleans** Block Constructed
tbd **Grand Prix–Atlanta** tbd
6–10 **World Championships–Berlin** Standard, Rochester Draft & Extended
22 **Japan Junior Championship–Yokohama**
22 **Japan High School Championship–Yokohama**
22–24 **Grand Prix–Yokohama** Block Constructed

September

tbd **Grand Prix–Pittsburgh** tbd
tbd **Grand Prix–Lyon/Disney** tbd
12–14 **Pro Tour–Boston** Team Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
27–28 **Grand Prix–Rimini** Standard or Block Constructed
27–28 **"Bacon" Prerelease** Sealed Deck

October

October–November **Qualifier Season for PT–TBD** Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
tbd **Grand Prix–North America** Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
6 **"Bacon" Release Date**
31–November 2 **Pro Tour–New Orleans** Extended

November

tbd **Grand Prix–Nagoya** Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
tbd **Grand Prix–Stockholm** Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
tbd **Grand Prix–North America** Sealed with Rochester Draft finals
1–2 **Grand Prix–Munich** Extended
8–9 **States/Provincials 2003** Standard

December

December–January **Qualifier Season for PT–TBD** Extended

Subject to Change
Events, dates, locations, and formats may change, especially for tournaments farther ahead in the schedule. Check **wizards.com/tournaments** for the most up-to-date event information.

Event Coverage
Sideboard Online provides live coverage of many tournaments around the world. Check the *Sideboard* Event Coverage section at **sideboard.com** for more information.

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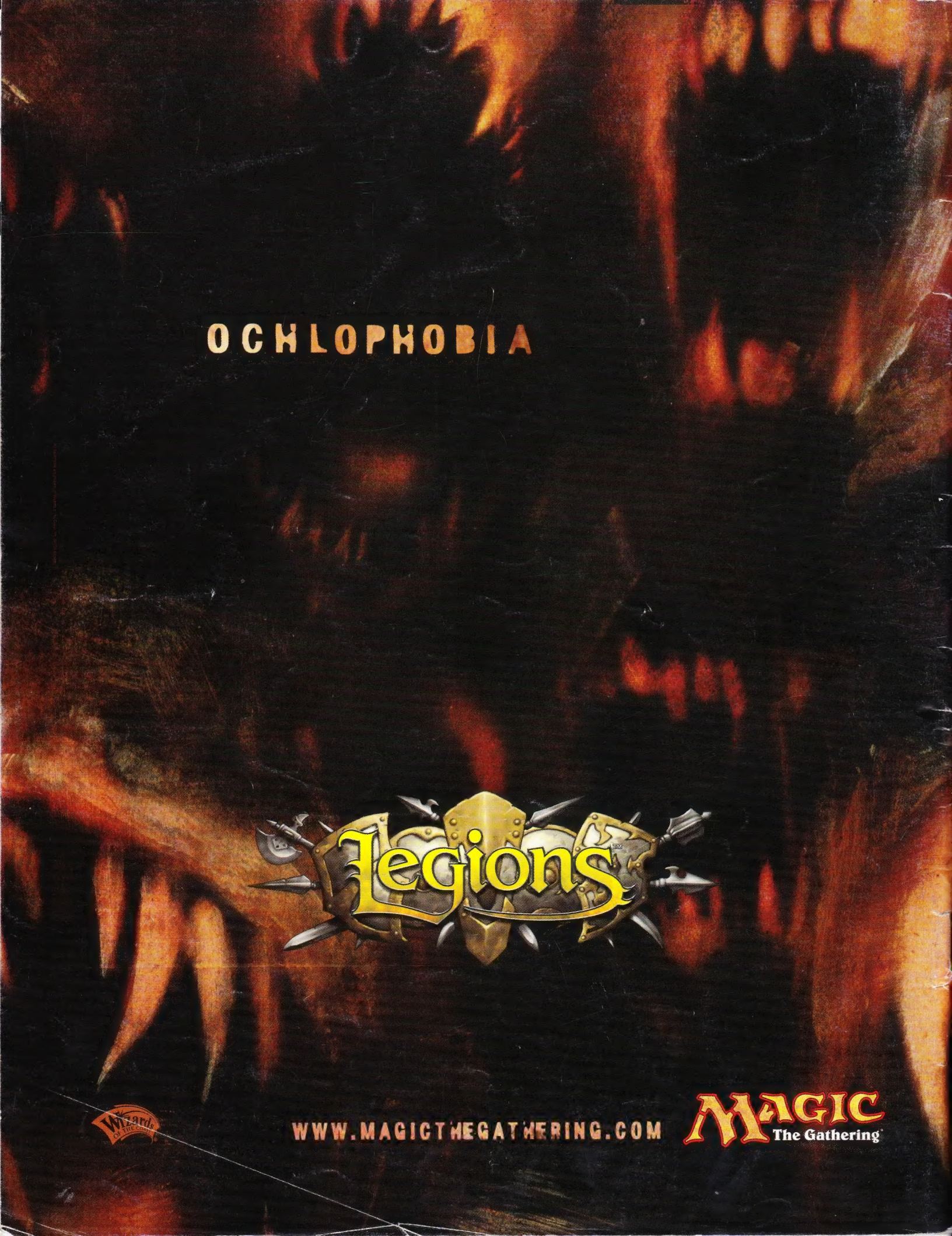
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